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## *Lord Liverpool*

Although the second Earl of Liverpool of the first creation was Prime Minister for no less than fifteen years, it is only recently that he has begun to receive the credit which is his due.

The Victorians, largely influenced by the sneers of Disraeli, regarded him with a contempt which was not unnatural on the part of those who lived in an age of prosperity and security, and had no personal experience of the difficulties with which Liverpool had to contend. For the present generation the case is very different, and we can readily both understand and sympathize with the man who had first to conduct a major war and then to deal with its aftermath.

Sir Charles Petrie has drawn a brilliant picture of the man and his times. The measure of achievement is that we are at last shown the true value of a man whose long administration was faced with difficulties which called for a temper and judgment not to be found among his contemporaries. By the sympathy the author makes us feel for Lord Liverpool, we have a much better understanding of the period.



## LORD LIVERPOOL AND HIS TIMES



By SIR CHARLES PETRIE

★

THE FOUR GEORGES: A REVALUATION

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LORD LIVERPOOL

From the portrait by Romney, by kind permission of  
the Master and Fellows of University College, Oxford.

# LORD LIVERPOOL

AND HIS TIMES

BY

SIR CHARLES PETRIE, BT.

LONDON  
JAMES BARRIE

1954

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## PREFACE

ALTHOUGH the second Earl of Liverpool of the first creation was Prime Minister continuously for no less than fifteen years it is only recently that he has begun to receive the credit which is his due. The Victorians, largely influenced by the sneers of Disraeli, regarded him with a contempt which was not unnatural on the part of those who lived in an age of prosperity and security, and had no personal experience of the difficulties with which Liverpool had to contend. For the present generation the case is very different, and we can readily both understand and sympathize with the man who had first to conduct a major war and then to deal with its aftermath.

I should like to express my most grateful thanks to Sir Tresham Lever, Bt., for his great kindness in working through a number of documents on my behalf, and also to Mr. J. W. F. Hill and Major the Hon. Robert Foljambe for information on several points.

Unless otherwise stated, documents quoted are extracted from *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, by C. D. Yonge (London, 1868).

CHARLES PETRIE.



## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND AND EARLY YEARS

1770-1790

ROBERT BANKS JENKINSON, who was one day to be Prime Minister for fifteen uninterrupted years, was born in London on June 7th, 1770, and was christened at St. Margaret's, Westminster, at the end of that same month. He was the eldest son of Charles Jenkinson, M.P., by his first wife, Amelia, daughter of one William Watts, a former Governor of Fort William, Bengal.

It is always interesting, and usually profitable, to consider the family history of those who have risen to high office in Church or State, "for experience seems to show," writes a modern author, "that genius is no *lusus naturae*, but must spring from a land well tilled and cared for in previous generations; and, unless the land is exceptionally rich and prolific, the production of one genius apparently exhausts it."<sup>1</sup> Robert Banks Jenkinson was certainly not a genius, but he accomplished the no mean feat of holding the office of Prime Minister for a continuous period longer than any other man in his country's history with the exception of the younger Pitt; and it may be claimed on his behalf that he sprang from a land well tilled and cared for in the past. His father never felt any need to be ashamed of his origin. During a debate in the House of Commons on February 7th, 1770, "Tommy" Townshend, a Rockingham Whig, remarked to Charles Jenkinson that his "pompous manner" did not become "a gentleman risen from the situation he has done." To this Jenkinson replied, "My rise is from as old a family as his own. I have risen by industry, by attention to duty, and by every honourable means I could

<sup>1</sup> Williams, B., *Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*.

devise." At this point we are told that Sir William Blackett, an old Tory member, interposed with the observation, "Every man carries his honour in his own hand. Origin is nothing; it shall never have any weight with me."<sup>1</sup>

In actual fact both the parents of Charles Jenkinson<sup>2</sup> came from well-established county families, but, his father being a younger son and his mother the daughter of a cadet branch, neither of them had any fortune. The Jenkinson family, which claimed descent from Anthony Jenkinson, an Elizabethan explorer, settled in Oxfordshire early in the seventeenth century, became baronets at the Restoration, and represented the county in Parliament from 1705 to 1727. Charles's father, Colonel Charles Jenkinson of the Royal Horse Guards, was the youngest son of Sir Robert Jenkinson, Bt., who was M.P. for Oxfordshire from 1709 to 1717. His mother was the daughter of a naval captain, Wolfram Cornwall, whose family had long been settled in Herefordshire. It may be added that in due course the elder branch of the Jenkinson family died out in the male line, and the baronetcy devolved upon Charles, who had by that time been created a peer with the title of Lord Hawkesbury.

The public life of Charles Jenkinson had little direct influence upon that of his son, but some account of it must be given if the background of the future Prime Minister's career is to be understood. The older man was educated at Charterhouse and University College, Oxford, and after the publication of a couple of political treatises, which seem to have attracted some attention, he obtained an introduction to Lord Bute when he was still in his early thirties: thereafter his rise was rapid, and although he never held any of the greater offices, his name frequently occurs in the correspondence of those who did hold them. He entered the House of Commons for Cockermouth in 1761, and two years later he was Joint Secretary to the Treasury. For the next three decades he held a number of appointments such as Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, Master of the Mint, Secretary at War, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1786 he went to the Upper House as

<sup>1</sup> Cavendish, Sir H., *Debates of the House of Commons*, vol. I, p. 448.

<sup>2</sup> He was himself born in Winchester, probably in 1727.

Lord Hawkesbury, and ten years later he was created Earl of Liverpool. On this occasion he was given permission to quarter the arms of the city of Liverpool on his shield, an action which met with the approval of, and may well have been prompted by, the Mayor and Corporation of that city, presumably on account of the services which he had rendered to trade and commerce when he was President of the committee of council for the affairs of Trade and Plantations.<sup>1</sup>

These honours were accompanied at various times by more material awards, such as the Auditorship of the accounts of the Princess Dowager of Wales, the Clerkship of the Pells in Ireland, and the Collectorship of the Customs Inward; in consequence, his son was enabled to pursue a political career without any embarrassments or anxieties of a pecuniary nature.<sup>2</sup>

It would be idle to deny that Charles Jenkinson earned much unpopularity among his contemporaries and has often been accused by posterity for trimming his sails to whatever wind happened to be blowing. There is much truth in the charge, but in his defence it can be pleaded that he lived in an age when the Constitution was in a state of transition. As Professor Namier has well said, "It was but very slowly that the Civil Service acquired its present corporate structure, independence, and aloofness. About 1760 the *commis* in the office of the Secretaries of State (who would now be Permanent Under-Secretaries) and the Secretaries to various government departments were personal dependants of the Ministers, but at the same time frequently Members of Parliament. . . . The question in how far their allegiance was due to the person and how far to the office of the Minister was not solved as yet, and gave rise to conflicting loyalties and to bitter resentments."<sup>3</sup> One person, at any rate, never questioned the loyalty of Charles Jenkinson, and that was George III; this fact was on more than one occasion to prove of great value to his eldest son.

In a debate in the House of Lords in March 1787, the Duke

<sup>1</sup> The best account of Charles Jenkinson's early career is to be found in *The Jenkinson Papers, 1760-1766*, edited by Ninetta S. Jucker.

<sup>2</sup> He is said when Prime Minister to have had an income of £13,000 a year from official sources.

<sup>3</sup> *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, p. 47.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

of Norfolk, in a speech of criticism of the commercial treaty which had just been concluded with France, said of Hawkesbury, "I am aware that the noble Lord who has undertaken to support the treaty and to justify ministers has on his shoulders the principal burden of government. He is a peer of great weight and authority."<sup>1</sup> Yet Hawkesbury was never in the Cabinet, and he never held any office higher than that of the Presidency of the Board of Trade, a post of less consequence in 1787 than it had been before the loss of the American colonies. There would not appear to be any valid reason why he should not have risen higher, unless it was that he was aware of his own insufficiency should he be matched against such giants as Fox, Burke, Sheridan, and Windham. His strength lay not in debate but in administration; he was supremely competent, and a first-rate departmental chief; but he remained in the eyes of the world a minor politician.

Such was the father of the future Prime Minister. His mother died before he was a month old, and in due course Charles Jenkinson married again, this time Catherine, daughter of Sir Cecil Bishop of Parham, Sussex, and widow of Sir Charles Cope, Bt., of Orton Longueville; by her he had a son and a daughter, namely the Hon. Charles Cecil Cope Jenkinson, who was successively M.P. for Sandwich and third Earl of Liverpool, and Lady Charlotte Jenkinson, who married the first Earl of Verulam.

It is not easy to assess the influence of his home life upon the motherless boy, and in any event he was not destined to spend any great part of his earlier years under his father's roof, for while still very young he was sent to what would now be described as a preparatory school at Parsons Green, where he remained until he was twelve. All the same he had the advantage, for one who was destined to a political career, of being brought up in a world where he was continually in contact with those who controlled the country's destinies; as Macaulay was to write of Swift, to him the most important affairs of State were as familiar as his weekly bills. It was the strength of England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in the absence of a trained Civil Service, that so many of her

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wraxall, Sir N. W., *Historical and Posthumous Memoirs*, vol. IV, p. 420.

statesmen had been brought up in an atmosphere of public business, which was thus from the beginning an integral part of their lives. Robert Banks Jenkinson was among the number, as were most of those with whom he was to come into touch once he entered Parliament, with the notable exception of George Canning. For the rest, the relations between father and son seem always to have been on a footing of friendship which was rare in that, and is none too common in any, age.

From Fulham the boy went to his father's old school, Charterhouse, then, of course, in the City of London, but his career there does not seem to have been in any way notable; at any rate no records of it have been preserved, except that he entered Dr. Berdmore's (the Schoolmaster's) House in September 1783 and left on April 20th, 1787. One letter, however, written by his father during this period may be quoted, as it throws a light both on the boy's education and on his relations with his surviving parent.

Addiscombe Place,  
*November 4th, 1784.*

My dear Bob,

I send you the enclosed letter, which I received from Sir Banks Jenkinson<sup>1</sup> a few days ago, as you will see by the latter part of it how much we are all of us interested in your welfare; and I hope it will serve as an inducement to you to pursue your studies with great industry, as you will thereby secure to yourself the affection and support of every part of your family.

You are so advanced in your Latin and Greek that I have no doubt that by the time you leave the Charterhouse you will be properly master of those two languages; but I wish you at present to pay great attention to your exercises, in which you are not very forward, and I have on this head but one piece of advice to give you, which is, that you should not be satisfied in doing your exercises just so as to pass without censure, but always aim at perfection; and be assured that in doing so you will by degrees approach to it.

I hope also that you will avail yourself of every leisure moment to apply yourself to algebra and the mathematics; you will thereby attain not only a knowledge of those sciences, but by an early acquaintance with them you will acquire a habit of reasoning closely and correctly on every subject, which will on all occasions be of infinite use to you. The hours which are not employed in the manner before mentioned you will give to the reading of history and books of criticism, and here the knowledge you have of the French language will furnish you with many excellent books. I would wish

<sup>1</sup> The head of the family.



## LORD LIVERPOOL

you for the present not to read any novels, as they will only waste your time, which you will not find more than sufficient for the pursuit of more useful and important studies.

What I have just pointed out to you are the principal objects you should have in view; but believe me, in addition to all these it will be necessary that you should pay proper attention to your person. Every failing in this respect creates disgust, or exposes a man to ridicule in such a manner as to defeat the advantages he would otherwise derive from his parts and learning, or accomplishments of greater importance. You will recollect the advice I have of late repeatedly given you on this subject, and I am sure you will attend to it, for you are just at the age when improper manners and tastes are acquired, which will become habitual if they are not now corrected.

My letter is a long one; I am persuaded, however, that you will impute all I have written to the affection I bear you. Believe me, that the principal happiness I shall expect to enjoy in the decline of life is that which I shall derive from your prosperity and eminence. If I mistake not, there are others of our family who, like me, look forward with anxiety to the figure you will hereafter make in the world, and feel themselves interested in the character you will bear. It is my earnest wish and firm persuasion that we shall not be disappointed. Lady Cope and your cousins desire their love to you.

I am, with great truth, dear Bob,

Your affectionate Father,

C. Jenkinson.

Jenkinson went from Charterhouse to Christ Church, and he matriculated on April 27th, 1787, so presumably he came into residence in the Trinity term of that year, with an interval of only a week after leaving school. He does not appear to have made a wide circle of friends at Oxford, and in one of his letters to his father he talks of living principally with "a few particular people"; foremost among them was George Canning, who had been at Eton, and was of the same year as himself. The two men were to be close friends and political associates for the next forty years, and it was Canning who succeeded Jenkinson as Prime Minister. They differed greatly both in background and in temperament. Canning was of Irish origin, the son of an unsuccessful barrister and an actress of doubtful reputation; there was nothing he touched that he did not adorn, yet he had a bitter tongue and a contempt for the opinions of others which on more than one occasion proved a handicap to him in public life, and which might, indeed, have prevented him from reaching the highest offices had these defects not been more than

counterbalanced by a brilliance which overcame every obstacle. Canning was at that time a Whig, and it was often alleged by contemporaries that his friendship with Jenkinson, like his father a staunch Tory, had much to do with the subsequent change of his political views.

The two young men had not been long at the University before they founded a debating society at Christ Church. It consisted of six members, and it met every Thursday evening in the rooms of one of them. It was typical of many such another institution both before and since. "Sometimes," Canning has left on record, "we appeared at the dinner in the hall dressed in our uniform, which was a brown coat, of rather an uncommon shade, with velvet cuffs and collar. The buttons bore the initials of Demosthenes, Cicero, Pitt, and Fox. Thus habited, and much the object of notice to every passing observer, we pleased ourselves with the excessive curiosity which our dress excited. As secret were we as the grave on all that concerned our oratorical institution, and it would be difficult to give an idea of the anxiety evinced by our fellow collegians to discover the meaning of this brown coat and velvet cuffs."<sup>1</sup> Authority, however, seems to have frowned on the venture, for the Dean, Dr. Cyril Jackson, advised Canning that it was a waste of time for a young man with his career to make, while Jenkinson wrote to his father, "Though I had contracted a habit of disputing in company during the two or three first terms I was here, I have been long since convinced of the bad effects arising from that habit. . . . My tutor has frequently thought that I have been too much run away with by general ideas, and that I do not weigh and consider a book sufficiently." It was neither the first nor the last time that Oxford undergraduates have neglected their work for politics.

Another friendship which Jenkinson made at this time was with a man slightly younger than himself, namely Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, the youngest son of the Marquess of Stafford, who was eventually created Lord Granville. In due course he joined Jenkinson and Canning in the House of Commons, but he forsook politics for diplomacy, and after a brilliant career in that field he was still to be found representing

<sup>1</sup> Newton, J. F., *Early Days of the Right Hon. George Canning*, pp. 6-8.

his Queen in Paris in the later days of the July Monarchy, long after his two Christ Church friends were in their premature graves.

Few people would have prophesied at that time that Jenkinson would become Prime Minister. His manner was serious, almost pompous, and he only unbent in the company of intimates. He certainly worked hard, and his acquaintance with the classics was profound. Like Austen Chamberlain in a later age, he was being trained in statesmanship while he was an undergraduate, and his letters to his father afford plenty of evidence of his interest in public affairs. He was a strong supporter of Pitt and his administration, though it is interesting to note that on one occasion he took leave "to lament the madness and folly of which Mr. Pitt had been guilty" in supporting Wilberforce's measures for the abolition of the Slave Trade. In short, Jenkinson's career at Oxford was creditable without being in any way brilliant.

He took his degree in May 1790, but he went down in the summer of the previous year in preparation for those travels which were to render him an eye-witness of events by which the whole of his subsequent career was to be influenced.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

1790-1801

LORD HAWKESBURY did not intend that his son's visit to the Continent should be a "grand tour" in the ordinarily accepted sense of that term. Young Jenkinson was sent abroad to inform himself of what was taking place and to make the acquaintance of those in authority, not just to gape at the monuments of antiquity at such times as he could not shake himself free from a bear-leader to plunge into dissipation; and he seems to have fulfilled his father's instructions. He was both by temperament and learning peculiarly well fitted to benefit by foreign travel, for, as we have seen, he was keenly interested in politics, and his knowledge of history and literature was considerable. In one respect he was more fortunate than he realized. He was visiting a scene which was soon to pass away for ever as the doctrines of the French Revolution undermined, and the armies of revolutionary France overwhelmed, the civilization of a thousand years. For two decades a large part of the Continent was to be closed to the English traveller, and when the curtain was again lifted a very different prospect was to meet the eye. Talleyrand declared that only those who had lived before the French Revolution knew how pleasant life could be, and Jenkinson was privileged to see a few months of this life before it gave way to a very different state of affairs.

He went first to Italy, and his observations from there throw a not uninteresting light on his views and outlook. He was not easily impressed, and he wrote to his father that "with respect to the country nothing can be so disagreeable as the country about Rome. If I had never been in Holland, I should say it was the ugliest country I ever beheld; indeed it is difficult to

believe that the Romans, who had the whole world to choose out of, should have continued long to reside in a country so unhealthy and so disgusting." The Neapolitan countryside was much more to his liking, and he describes it as "the most beautiful country I ever beheld; the richest cultivation, the greatest variety of hill and vale, the most striking points of view; here I should say Saturn must have resided during the golden age." In committing himself to this supposition, however, Jenkinson apparently forgot that Vergil had established the old deity in the very district which he had criticized so adversely to his father.<sup>1</sup>

There were, however, other aspects of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies which Jenkinson did not find so much to his liking. "Nothing is more common than assassinations in Naples: the week does not pass without your hearing of four or five, and in cases of murder little redress is to be found. The judges are so poor that they are most liable to be bribed, so that, if the criminal has any money, he is almost sure of escaping. I was told by a gentleman of some consideration in this place that it was computed that the King lost in the town of Naples above four thousand subjects every year by assassination, and that murder was considered as a crime much inferior to theft." He did not take a great deal better view of the upper classes. "Among the higher rank of people there are very few that are worth knowing; they are not only ignorant, but in general they despise every kind of knowledge. The women are gallant, without being, for the most part, either amiable or pleasing."

These may, perhaps, be dismissed as the superficial observations of an undergraduate, but what is of real interest is the extent to which Jenkinson, like the whole of his generation, was permeated with the influence of the classics. There was nothing superficial about this, and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that it was for this very reason they wrote and spoke such good English. "I have travelled," Jenkinson tells his father, "with Aeneas through the grotto of the Sybil and the lake of Avernus; I have passed with him from Tartarus to Cocytus, and from Cocytus to Elysium. I have drunk Falernian wine in the villa of Hortensius, contemplating from the same spot the Temple of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Aeneid*, VIII, 319-332.

Venus, the houses of Cicero and Caesar, and the reputed (though falsely so) tomb of Agrippina. I have visited the baths of Marius and the famous ruin of the Temple of Jupiter. Vergil has been my constant companion; I have found him not inferior in geography to poetry, and I shall in a few days pay my homage at the tomb of the divine poet, remembering with a grateful heart the luxurious moments his verses have so lately afforded me." One may be sure that this tribute was as sincere as it was delicate.

When Jenkinson left Italy for France it was to pass into a very different world, for the Revolution was just beginning, and he arrived in time to see the storming of the Bastille on July 14th.<sup>1</sup> His letters from Paris at this period contain many references to, and comments upon, contemporary events, but they are of no particular importance, for he was no more prophetic of what lay ahead than any other of his fellow-countrymen with the exception of Burke. What is of interest is the lasting impression made upon him by the scenes he witnessed during those momentous July and August days. He saw how under a weak administration discontent can grow into revolt, and revolt can easily become revolution; he never forgot the lesson he learnt in Paris that summer, and it formed the basis of his policy as Prime Minister when similar dangers appeared to threaten his own country. It was all very well for Disraeli to accuse him of mistaking "disorganization for sedition," but Disraeli did not live in a revolutionary age, while the man he criticized had seen with his own eyes what happened when authority faltered in the hour of crisis.

His fellow-countrymen were far from sharing his anxiety. The British public is always slow to view Continental movements in their proper perspective, and its first impressions are by no means always its final ones. This was certainly the case with the French Revolution. When Louis XVI began to get into difficulties there was, for a variety of reasons, considerable satisfaction in Great Britain. In the first place, the part played by France in the War of American Independence was far from

<sup>1</sup> We have this on his own authority, for in his speech on Lord Lansdowne's motion on the state of the country on November 30th, 1819, he expressly stated that he "was present at the capture of the Bastille."

being either forgotten or forgiven, and there was a natural tendency to rejoice over her troubles. Then the Bourbons had always been the enemies of England, so that their misfortunes were hardly calculated to bring tears to the eyes of the ordinary Englishman. Lastly, it appeared at first as if all that was happening in France was the substitution of a limited for an absolute monarchy, and this naturally made a strong appeal to that section of the British people which believed it had done the same thing a century before.<sup>1</sup> Fox, whose heart always ran away with his head, thought that the French Revolution was the counterpart of the English, and when he heard of the fall of the Bastille he wrote to a friend who was going to Paris:

How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world! and how much the best! If you go without my seeing you, pray say something civil for me to the Duke of Orleans, whose conduct seems to have been perfect: and tell him and Lauzun that all my prepossessions against French connections for this country will be at an end, and indeed most part of my European system of politics will be altered, if this revolution has the consequences that I expect!<sup>2</sup>

The "European system of politics" was certainly going to be altered, and it was not long before the conduct of Philippe Egalité was shown up in its true light; but Fox was never a judge of character.

One of the reasons why opinion in Great Britain was slow to appreciate what was really at issue on the other side of the Channel was that the drama there unfolded itself comparatively gradually. The storming of the Bastille took place on July 14th, 1789, but it was not until June 1791 that the French Royal Family attempted to escape, and another year elapsed before Louis XVI was suspended from the exercise of his functions. On more than one occasion during these years it appeared highly probable that the Revolution, like the Fronde, would be crushed (as it certainly would have been had Louis shown the firmness displayed by George III during the Gordon Riots), or that France would settle down under a constitutional monarchy. That the infection might spread to his own country never at this stage occurred to the ordinary Englishman.

<sup>1</sup> Similar views were held in 1917 regarding the Russian Revolution, and a similar disillusionment followed.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hobbhouse, *C., Fox*, p. 223.

On his return home Jenkinson obtained through his father's influence a seat in the House of Commons. Sir James Lowther arranged for his election for his own borough of Appleby, for which the younger Pitt had once sat, but he apparently resigned soon after being elected. At the same time he was returned for the borough of Rye, and he continued to represent that constituency during the whole time he was in the Lower House, that is to say until 1803.<sup>1</sup> Strange as all this may appear to a later generation, it was not unique, for both Charles James Fox and Lord John Russell were elected while still minors.

Parliamentary procedure, as a whole, was very different from what it was later to become. Those were not the days when every important vote was made one of confidence, and measures were introduced by private members which would now emanate from the Treasury Bench alone. Members of the same Cabinet often took opposite sides on issues upon which agreement would now be considered essential. When, for example, the young member for Rye himself became Prime Minister he allowed Catholic Emancipation to be regarded as an "open" question, so that Canning and Eldon could be respectively Foreign Secretary and Lord Chancellor although they voted against one another in any division on the subject. The executive was dependent upon the legislative in fact as well as in theory, and a Prime Minister had to rely more on himself, and less on his office, to control the House than has since become the case. In these circumstances such defeats as those which Pitt sustained on the Westminster petition, the fortification of naval bases, and Parliamentary Reform were neither meant nor interpreted as efforts to overthrow him; they constituted a warning not to go too fast, and so he regarded them.

If the House of Commons was less regimented than in more recent times, it was also much less well-behaved. Members were in the habit of cracking nuts, eating oranges, lying on the benches, and going up into the galleries for a doze. On one occasion North, when Prime Minister, was taxed by a particularly dull speaker with being asleep, and replied that he wished to heaven he was. Once when Burke rose to speak with

<sup>1</sup> He is shown as having been returned for both boroughs at the General Election of 1790, so perhaps what happened was that he opted for Rye.



a packet of papers in his hand, a member exclaimed, "I do hope the honourable gentleman does not mean to read that large bundle of papers, and bore us with a long speech into the bargain."<sup>1</sup> Possibly owing to the amount of liquor consumed, emotions were more easily roused then than now, and the ordinary M.P. was not ashamed to weep in the House; indeed, the shedding of tears in public continued until a much later date.<sup>2</sup> Anger, as well as tears, went unrestrained, and in 1778 Burke is found flinging a volume of estimates at the Treasury Bench.<sup>3</sup> The dramatic, too, was by no means eschewed. When Burke was endeavouring to rouse the House against the French Revolution he took with him to Westminster a dagger as a sample of an order which France was alleged to have placed in Birmingham. At what he judged to be the psychological moment in the speech he was making on the registration of aliens he produced it from under his coat, and threw it on the floor. This, however, was considered to be going a little too far.

When Jenkinson took his seat the political situation was still under the influence of Pitt's victory over the coalition of Fox and North seven years before, and the General Election at which Jenkinson had been returned had resulted in a further increase in the Prime Minister's majority. The power of the Whigs was gradually being undermined by the growing popularity of the young Premier in the country, and also by the deliberate policy of the King and Pitt in continually adding to the members of the House of Lords, which had been a Whig stronghold ever since the Revolution. The ennoblement of Jenkinson's own father had been a notable example of this policy. Furthermore, the support of the commercial classes had been won for the government by Pitt's financial measures, for at the end of the War of American Independence in 1783 the country had been to all intents and purposes bankrupt. Abroad, the administration had repaired the national prestige, which had suffered so severely by the Treaty of Versailles. In 1788 Pitt had supported Prussia against France during the Dutch

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. A. B., *Burke, The Founder of Conservatism*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sichel, W., *Life of Sheridan*, vol. I, p. 132. Sir Samuel Hoare revived the custom in December 1935.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Newman, B., *Edmund Burke*, p. 75. This custom was revived by Mr. Ronald McNeill in November 1912 at the expense of Mr. Winston Churchill.

troubles, and had thereby not only checked French ambition in the Netherlands but had also brought to an end the isolation of Great Britain in Europe, while ten years later he gained a resounding diplomatic victory over Spain in the dispute with regard to Nootka Sound. On the other hand, the ministry was by no means as strong at Westminster as it was in the country. The King had been mad from November 1788 to March 1789, and might become so again at any moment; and the regency of the Prince of Wales would mean the return of the Whigs to office. Then, again, there was an important resignation from the Cabinet soon after the General Election, namely that of the Duke of Leeds, who was Foreign Secretary. Thus, in spite of Pitt's recent victory at the polls, the future of his administration was none too secure.

It was as a supporter of this administration, in which his father was President of the Board of Trade, that Jenkinson took his seat, but it was not until February 27th, 1792, that he delivered his maiden speech. To the end of his life he was never in the front rank of orators, and his manner seems to have been consequential; nor did he receive any aid from his appearance. His neck was reputed the longest in Europe, and a flickering eyelid was a godsend to the writer who rhymed "blinking son" with Jenkinson. His aspect in debate, according to the wits, was "as if he had been on the wrack three times and saw the wheel preparing for a fourth," and, as Professor Keith Feiling has put it, "his portrait has, indeed, that look of lowering strain, almost of torture, not uncommon in a generation of public men who died in their prime."<sup>1</sup> His strength lay rather in his capacity for mastering detail and for collecting information which could be bodily transferred to Hansard; in later life these assets were combined with soundness of judgment, so that Jenkinson could always be certain of the respect and attention of his audience, even if his oratory lacked the brilliance and polish of that of Fox and Canning.

His first speech was concerned with an aspect of foreign policy which was particularly embarrassing for the government. Pitt, unlike his father and nearly all his contemporaries, regarded Russia with suspicion, while the general attitude in

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches in Nineteenth Century Biography*, p. 20.

Great Britain was to look on her as a useful counterweight to France, and to that country's traditional allies, namely Sweden, Poland, and Turkey. The Prime Minister did not take this view, and he was seriously alarmed at the progress of a Power whose appetite for Polish and Turkish provinces appeared insatiable: he believed Catherine the Great to be determined upon the conquest of Constantinople, and he realized to the full the dangers which this would involve to British trade in the Mediterranean. Outwardly Pitt was in a strong position, for Britain had recently emerged from that isolation which had been her lot during the War of American Independence, and in 1788 the Triple Alliance of Great Britain, Prussia, and the United Provinces had been formed for mutual defence and the maintenance of peace.

During the course of their operations against the Turks the Russian troops had captured the town of Ochakov, near the mouth of the Bug, and the Triple Alliance adopted the line that this place must be returned to the Sultan. Apart from his natural suspicion of Russian intentions, Pitt advanced this demand for two reasons: he had been led to believe that Ochakov was the key to Constantinople, and he desired to satisfy the Russophobe feelings of Prussia, to whom he had recently been compelled to point out that Great Britain would not permit the Triple Alliance to be used as an instrument for the aggrandizement of that country in Central Europe at the expense of Austria and Poland.

The Tsarina refused to give way, and she was encouraged in this attitude by Fox, who departed so far from customary diplomatic procedure as to send to St. Petersburg a representative of the Opposition, in the person of Sir Robert Adair, with instructions to encourage Russian resistance to the British government. An ultimatum was sent to Catherine, and war appeared imminent, when Pitt was forced to give way. More than one of his colleagues questioned his policy, which was also unpopular in the City and in the country as a whole. At this time, too, it began to be realized that Ochakov did not possess the strategical importance with which it had been invested. The ultimatum was accordingly never delivered, and by the Treaty of Jassy in January 1792 the Russians retained their

conquest. To the government the shock was considerable, and there was even talk of its resignation. Pitt had once more gone too far ahead of public opinion, but, all the same, he managed to weather the storm, though, as we have seen, it cost him his Foreign Secretary, who was replaced by Lord Grenville. The Opposition was determined to do everything in its power to discredit the administration, and Samuel Whitbread, the brewer, moved "That Ochakov was not of sufficient importance to warrant the armed interference of Great Britain." This was the Samuel Whitbread of whom Canning wrote:

I am like Archimedes for science and skill,  
 I am like the young prince who went straight up the hill;  
 And, to interest the hearts of the fair, be it said,  
 I am like a young lady just bringing to bed:  
 If you ask why the eleventh of June I remember  
 So much better than April, or March, or December,  
 'Tis because on that day, and with pride I assure ye,  
 My sainted progenitor took to his brewery.  
 On that day in the month he began making beer,  
 On that night he commenced his connubial career;  
 On that day he died, when he had finished his summing,  
 And the angels all cried, "Here's old Whitbread a-coming."  
 So the day I still hail with a smile and a sigh,  
 For his beer with an *e*, and his bier with an *i*;  
 And one day every year, in the hottest of weather,  
 The whole Whitbread family dine altogether.  
 My lords, while the beams of the hall shall support  
 The roof which o'er shades this respectable court  
 (Where Hastings was tried for oppressing the Hindoos);  
 While the rays of the sun shall shine in these windows,  
 My name shall shine bright as my ancestor's shines,  
 Emblazoned on journals, as his upon signs.

In the ensuing debate Jenkinson intervened. Promise displayed in a maiden speech has often been belied by the speaker's subsequent career, but what Jenkinson said on this occasion provided the clue to his later achievements. He was not brilliant, and his biographer was guilty of gross exaggeration when he wrote that "our Parliamentary annals have recorded no maiden speech which made so great an impression."<sup>1</sup> Pitt was certainly flattering, for he declared that it

<sup>1</sup> Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. I, p. 17.

was "not only a more able first speech than had ever been heard from a young member, but one so full of philosophy and science, strong and perspicuous language, and sound and convincing arguments, that it would have done credit to the most practised debater and most experienced statesman that ever existed." The Prime Minister, however, was not a reliable witness, for being a young man himself he was always partial to youth, and in the present instance he was probably also animated by a desire to please a ministerial colleague. The merit of the speech, when one reads it in the light of the contemporary political situation and after the lapse of so many years, lies in the knowledge it displayed of the topic under debate, and of the approach the speaker made to his subject. In effect, it was sound and factual, and it gave evidence of an aptitude for political strategy remarkable in one so young. It may not have been the speech of a great orator; but it was essentially that of a future Prime Minister.

Jenkinson began by raising much wider issues than the mere possession of Ochakov, and he justified the policy of the government in an extensive survey of the general European situation. Events, indeed, were soon to falsify his statement that "the strength and influence of France are at an end, so that we have no further danger to apprehend from that once formidable rival," but he was speaking more prophetically than he knew when he came to deal with Russia and her aspirations. "A Power has succeeded to France no less deserving of attention from its restless politics and ambitious views, namely Russia; of which the conduct proves her deep-laid designs on the territories and independence of her potent neighbours. Her plans of conquest against the Turks are notorious. Were she to accomplish them, the balance of Europe would be totally destroyed, to the manifest injury of every state in this quarter of the globe."

Having thus adroitly diverted the discussion from the extremely dubious strategic and political value of Ochakov, he proceeded to defend the Prime Minister on the much stronger ground of resistance to Russian aggression. He justified the Porte for having begun the war by a reference to "the manner in which Russia had made herself mistress of the Crimea, to her intrigues in Egypt, and to the haughty and unjust claims which

she had put forth to some of the fairest provinces of the Sultan's dominions"; he then reminded the House that Britain had once already mediated successfully between the two Powers in question. Jenkinson next proceeded to point out that "the sovereign whose position would best enable him to stem the torrent of Russian aggression was the King of Prussia, and that therefore it was the highest wisdom in our government to draw closer the bonds of alliance with that potentate." This was an especially adroit line of reasoning since it would necessarily recommend the young speaker to the Prime Minister as it was an indirect approval of the elder Pitt's policy at the time of the Seven Years War. He concluded on a note calculated to appeal to his audience, even if his forecast was soon to prove unduly optimistic, for he declared that he "thanked God the present times were not favourable to wars of ambition and conquest; they are now justly reprobated throughout Europe; but in England, above all other countries, it was right they should be reprobated, for on peace our greatness as a nation completely and almost wholly depended; the interest of the country rested on permanent peace." The speech, in effect, was a success, not for its brilliance but for its competence.

In the summer of that same year, 1792, Jenkinson resumed his travels, and made further personal acquaintance with that world of the *ancien régime* which for better or worse was on the point of disappearing. This time he went first of all to Brussels, the capital of what was still the Austrian Netherlands, and from there he passed to Coblenz, which was at that time the headquarters of the main body of the *émigrés* from revolutionary France. At Coblenz he met many Frenchmen with whom he was to be brought into contact again in later years and in very different circumstances. A few of his letters to his father may, perhaps, be quoted for the light they throw both upon the writer and the events he describes.

Coblenz,

July 22nd, 1792.

Dear Father,

I arrived at this place the day before yesterday, and found no difficulty in procuring a lodging. There are at present very few French here, as they were most of them obliged to leave the town on the arrival of the Prussians.

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The Comte d'Artois<sup>1</sup> and M. de Calonne will return here to-day; the King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick are likewise expected from Mayence, where they had an interview with the Emperor.<sup>2</sup> The last regiment will arrive to-morrow. I have not yet seen the camp, which is situated at about a league from this town, but I propose riding there this evening. It is expected that there will be a grand review of the army on the 27th, and that on the 28th or 29th they will proceed to the frontier of France.

From my last letter you will easily judge that there is no direct communication between the King and Queen of France and the emigrant princes. Their confidence is completely placed in the Baron de Breteuil. The King was very much displeased that the projects which he had formed were abandoned by the emigrants. His wish was to separate the princes, that the Comte d'Artois should go to Madrid, Monsieur<sup>3</sup> to Turin, and the Prince de Condé should remain in this country. This system, as we know, is directly the reverse of what has been pursued. There is a complaint that the money which had been procured from the different courts of Europe has been extremely misapplied. Russia, Prussia, and Spain contributed very considerable sums. The intention certainly was that the whole of the money should be made use of for the support of the emigrants. Instead of this, however, a great part of it has been employed, by the advice of M. de Calonne, in an attempt to excite commotions in some of the frontier towns of France. . . .

It is not easy to conceive the sovereign contempt with which the Prussians of every description, soldiers as well as officers, treat the French. If they are satisfied that you are not a Frenchman, they behave to you with the greatest civility; to convince them of this, however, requires considerable pains. The French army consists of about 16,000 men. In this number there are about 500 soldiers; all the rest are officers. There are several persons who have been taken up as emissaries from the National Assembly; one of them, whose name I forget, offered his services to the Princes for the purpose of raising a body of men. The offer was accepted, but it was afterwards discovered that he had been employed by the clubs of Paris to raise these very men to fight against the emigrants. About fifty Frenchmen were sent away from Mayence a few days ago on suspicion of being democrats.

I remain, dear Father,

Your affectionate Son,

R. B. J.

Shortly before the death of Leopold II an offensive and defensive alliance had been concluded between Austria and

<sup>1</sup> Later King Charles X of France.

<sup>2</sup> Francis II, who had succeeded his father, Leopold II, in the previous March. He was the brother of Marie Antoinette.

<sup>3</sup> Later King Louis XVIII of France.

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Prussia, and on April 20th war was declared by France against Austria. A few days after Jenkinson had written the above letter to his father there appeared a manifesto by the Duke of Brunswick, who had been appointed to command the Austro-Prussian forces, and this did a great deal to defeat its own object by rallying moderate French opinion to the side of the Revolution. This document began by disclaiming any desire for conquest or intention to meddle in the internal affairs of France, but it called on the sane majority of the French people to declare themselves against the "odious schemes of their oppressors": it went on to threaten with all "the rigour of the laws of war" those who dared to defend themselves against the invading armies, while if further violence was offered to Louis XVI the citizens of Paris were threatened with an "exemplary and never-to-be-forgotten vengeance," by "giving up the town to military execution and total subversion, and the guilty rebels to the death they had deserved."

Jenkinson did not share the view which has generally been held by posterity.

Coblentz,

*July 25th, 1792.*

Dear Father,

I send you enclosed a copy of the manifesto which the Duke of Brunswick has thought fit to publish previous to the commencement of the campaign, and which he publicly circulated in the course of a day or two. Though I own it has been my opinion that it would have been better to take no step of this kind, as any manifesto must be in some degree a compromise, and as any compromise under the present circumstances, when the force is on their side, appears to me to be premature; yet, if it was determined to adopt a measure of this sort, a more unobjectionable paper could not have been imagined. It is moderate, and yet at the same time calculated to inspire terror. Indeed it is said that many of the emigrants consider it too moderate.

The King of Prussia arrived on Sunday night, and this morning reviewed the right wing of his camp. I was present at the review, and I was surprised, as indeed every foreigner must be, at the operations of the army. I had heard much of the discipline of the Prussian troops, and of their coolness and composure even a few days before they know they are to be in action. This therefore I could conceive: but the celerity and precision with which all their movements are performed are inconceivable to those who have not seen them. Every operation they go through is mechanical. All other armies, for instance, when music is played to them, are ordered to march



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in time to that music. On the contrary, the Prussian soldiers are obliged to march seventy-five steps in a minute, whatever may be the time of the music. By this means their march becomes a matter of exact calculation. . .

Dear Father,

Your affectionate Son,

R. B. Jenkinson.

Military matters had a fascination for Jenkinson throughout his life, which is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that his grandfather commanded the Blues. As a whole, British Prime Ministers have been essentially civilian in their outlook, and have only interested themselves in the army when circumstances have forced them to do so. Jenkinson was an exception, and he lost no opportunity of acquiring information about soldiers and their ways.

Coblentz,

*July 26th, 1792.*

Dear Father,

I have at length had an opportunity of fully gratifying my curiosity with the sight of the Prussian army. I should be at a loss to decide whether this great body of men was most deserving of attention from the choice of the individuals who compose it, from the discipline and subordination that reign in every part of it, or from the celerity and precision with which every military operation is performed. It is a subject of astonishment, even to those most versed in military affairs that, after a march of nearly seven weeks, the different regiments that have arrived here, instead of being exhausted and fatigued, appear in the fullest vigour and spirits, and in every respect prepared for the labours of the campaign. I have had an opportunity of conversing with several military men on the comparative state of this army with that of the Austrians, and I find it universally agreed that (except for the light troops) the Prussian army is indubitably the superior.

One reflection, however, necessarily occurs on this subject. The population of the King of Prussia's dominions is so small (scarcely exceeding five millions) that if, from any relaxation of discipline or any unforeseen accident, his army should decline, it would require such exertions to re-establish it as under a Prince of moderate capacity could scarcely be expected; and Prussia, from being the first military Power in Europe, would in that case be reduced at best to the state of a secondary Power.

The population of the dominions of the House of Austria is, on the contrary, so extensive, and the people in much the greater part of these dominions are so calculated by nature to form excellent soldiers, that, though the Austrian army may be inferior at one period to what it has proved itself at others, there is little danger of any considerable alteration

for the worse in that army; and, if any such alteration should take place, so great are the resources of the country that it might easily be re-established.<sup>1</sup>

The artillery of the Prussian army is moderate. It is, I believe, better than the Austrian. The French artillery was, before the Revolution in that country, without comparison the best in Europe. Since that period the greater part of the engineers have quitted France, and most of them are now in this neighbourhood. At present, therefore, the preference is given to the Prussian artillery.

I dined yesterday with the Duke of Brunswick. I found him particularly civil, and not uncommunicative; but, from the conversation I had with him, I could easily judge how impossible it would be to push him on any subject on which he was desirous of remaining silent. You will have seen by the copy of the manifesto which I have sent you that he disclaims, in the names of the Emperor and the King of Prussia, all idea of dismembering France. His conversation with me was to the same purport, and he added that it was the determination of those sovereigns to receive nothing in compensation for the expense they would be obliged to incur. This conduct must be admitted by all parties to reflect the greatest honour on these two courts.

In the course of the conversation I ridiculed the idea of the Jacobins debauching the French army with *assignats* of fifty sous. In reply to this he gave a most entertaining account of a Prussian army. As to *assignats*, he said, he commanded men who were too stupid to comprehend how it was possible that paper should have a value annexed to it; and as to women, he would defy all the beauty in the world to make any impression on Prussian soldiers. He concluded with observing, "*Ils sont grandes bêtes, mais pourtant ils savent bien leur affaire.*" I endeavoured to sound him on the affairs of Poland, but I could get no opinion from him on that subject. His silence, however, may be considered as a confirmation of what has been generally believed in this place, that that unfortunate country is devoted to destruction.

The King of Prussia<sup>2</sup> is here with his two sons. The Prince Royal<sup>3</sup> is well-informed, modest, and uncommonly well-disposed. His appearance, however, is rather against him. Prince Louis, the second son, has the advantage of an agreeable person in addition to all the good qualities of his brother. . . . I can perceive that the Prussians are excessively dissatisfied with the conduct of Great Britain respecting Russia. I have done all in my power to convince them that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, it was impossible for our government to have acted in any other manner; but to persons who live under an arbitrary government, who are unacquainted with the variety of interests that must be consulted in a

<sup>1</sup> The history of the ensuing twenty-three years was to prove the soundness of these views.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick William II.

<sup>3</sup> Later King Frederick William III of Prussia.

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government constituted like ours, all the reasoning that can be used is unintelligible.

The agreement between the Emperor and the King of Prussia, that no volunteers should be accepted, has been most rigidly adhered to. Prince Henry was very desirous of serving the campaign, but was refused. He is so incensed at the conduct of the King of Prussia, that he is determined to have no further concern with military affairs. The hereditary Prince of Orange has likewise been refused, and several of the generals of the army have not been permitted to take their sons as aides-de-camp.

My dear Father,

Your affectionate Son,

R. B. Jenkinson.

By this time the invasion of France had begun, and Jenkinson determined to see something of the allied army in the field.

Coblentz,

August 8th, 1792.

Dear Father,

I quitted this place the day after writing my last letter, and set out for Mayence. From Mayence I went to Mannheim. I found the Austrians had passed the Rhine. I determined, however, to follow them, and, understanding that they had marched towards Spires, I immediately set out for that place. I found them encamped not far from Spires, and discovered, from one of their officers, that they were to quit their camp at 12 o'clock that night and march to the frontier. I left Spires between 10 and 11 o'clock, and went to a village at the distance of about a league from it; and I had there the satisfaction of seeing five-and-twenty thousand Austrians within twelve miles of the frontier, marching under the command of Prince Hohenlohe. I never saw a more striking scene. They appeared elated with joy at the thoughts of attacking the French the next morning. . . .

The Austrian army is apparently very inferior to the Prussian. One of the striking features of the Prussian army is, that amongst several thousand men you will scarcely see one who is inferior to the rest, with such extraordinary care are they chosen. I cannot say as much of the Austrian army; some of the troops are beautiful, but there is a great difference distinguishable in every part of the army. The Austrians hate the French at least as much as the Prussians. I happened to say to one of their officers, "You expect some of the French to join you in a few days?" His answer was, "*Nous n'en avons pas besoin, nous ferons bien notre affaire sans eux.*"

It is singular that the Powers of Germany should be so particularly active in support of the aristocrats, when, so far as I can judge, this is the country which had the least to dread from the propagation of the new doctrines. I have found in every place where I have been the most marked contempt for French of all descriptions, both aristocrats and democrats.

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There exists the greatest animosity between the Austrian and Prussian army. It is scarcely possible to conceive how they hate each other. I have taken particular pains to ascertain this fact, and you may depend on the truth of it. I understand that the King of Prussia's expedition is very unpopular in his own country; the wish of his subjects was to assist the Poles against the Empress of Russia. It has been reported here, but I will not answer for the truth of it, that the Poles are so offended with the conduct of the King of Prussia, who they say has deceived them, that they are determined to throw themselves, without any further resistance, into the arms of Russia.

Dear Father,

Your affectionate Son,

R. B. J.

Meanwhile the invading forces were making satisfactory progress, though the differences between the allies, which had so impressed Jenkinson, did not make for harmonious co-operation in the field. Their advance was painfully slow, but all the same the Prussians had started well. A cavalry skirmish on August 19th saw the advance-guard of the French army of the Centre driven back in confusion, while on the 20th Longwy was summoned, and three days later it surrendered. Verdun also capitulated after a very feeble resistance. By this time, however, Jenkinson had discovered that Prussian policy was not so altruistic as Brunswick had led him, in his innocence, to suppose.

Bruxelles,

*August 23rd, 1792.*

Dear Father,

. . . . You will remember that, in a letter which I wrote to you from Coblenz, I informed you that, from the tenor of the Duke of Brunswick's conversation to me, I was led to suppose that the Court of Berlin, in their interference in the affairs of France, had not only renounced every idea of conquest and aggrandizement, but that it was their determination not to accept of even a pecuniary compensation. This was the tenor of the Duke of Brunswick's conversation to me and to several of the persons at Coblenz.

Since my arrival at this place, however, I have come to the truth of the transaction. A correspondence has passed on this subject between the Comte de Schulenburg<sup>1</sup> and the Baron de Breteuil.<sup>2</sup> The Comte de Schulenburg, in a letter to the Baron de Breteuil, informed him that his

<sup>1</sup> Prussian Foreign Minister.

<sup>2</sup> Representative of Louis XVI abroad.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

master the King of Prussia would expect to be reimbursed. The Baron de Breteuil, in his answer, requested a particular explanation of the term "reimbursed." To this it was replied that all the King of Prussia desired was that the extraordinary expenses of the campaign might be defrayed; but that his master expected some declaration from the King of France on that subject. The Baron de Breteuil then declared that, possessing full powers from the King, he could promise a complete reimbursement of all the expenses of the campaign, and that, if this was not sufficient, he would engage to procure a declaration to this purport in the King's handwriting. This answer of the Baron's was considered as satisfactory.

It will most probably appear extraordinary to you that the Austrians should never have commenced their operations till the entrance of the Prussians into France was fully ascertained. The mystery of the whole business is now, however, unravelled. The Austrians were determined from the beginning to engage the Prussians as principals in the war. The intrigues that were employed to accomplish this object would be too numerous to state at present. One of their projects is, if possible, to drain Prussia of her treasure. A campaign of this kind is certainly not to be considered as a campaign in Silesia, where the greatest part of the money expended would return again into the coffers of the government. If Prussia is fully reimbursed, according to the promise that has been made, the projects of Austria will be defeated; but it is impossible to place any certain reliance on a promise made under the present circumstances, which perhaps it may not even be in the power of the parties to fulfil.

The account that I gave you in a former letter of the animosity subsisting between the Austrians and Prussians I have found confirmed in every place I have passed through. An account was received last night of the capture of Longwy by the Prussians. It is said that, on the entry of the emigrant army into France, Monsieur is to be declared Regent of the country. A report has been circulated to-day of a quarrel having arisen between Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois. . . .

Dear Father,

Your affectionate Son,

R. B. Jenkinson.

You will, of course, be cautious of disclosing the contents of my letters from this place.

The jealousies which existed between the two leading German Powers, and the difficulty of persuading them to combine in any common action against France, were to be a source of concern to Jenkinson until Waterloo had been fought and won, and it was well that at the beginning of his career there should be dispersed any illusions he might have on the score of the mutual relations between Vienna and Berlin.

## POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

Bruxelles,  
*August 27th.*

My dear Father,

. . . . The plan of the operations of the different armies is supposed to be arranged in the following manner. M. de Clairfait, after having taken Longwy, was to proceed to attack Montmédy; and the Duke of Brunswick was to march on the 27th towards Verdun, and, after having taken the place, was to proceed with all possible expedition to Paris.

The conduct of the King and the Duke of Brunswick since their entrance into France has been particularly well judged. They have released all the National Guards, on pretence that, not being taken under arms, they did not come within the meaning of the manifesto. They have done all in their power to conciliate them, and, to all appearance, with complete effect. The King, however, has at the same time declared that, if he should find any of them either dressed in the national uniform or with the national cockade, he shall immediately make an example of them.

The Prussian army on its first entrance into the country was disposed to plunder, and to behave with the greatest severity towards the inhabitants. Several villages had suffered considerably from the enormities which had been exercised. The King of Prussia went himself into the villages, gave the people money as a compensation for their sufferings, and ordered two of his soldiers who were principally concerned in these atrocities to be executed. If he continues to pursue this line of conduct, behaving with gentleness to those who are willing to submit, and with severity to those who are disposed to resist, the success of his operations will be extremely facilitated.

You probably know that the Baron de Breteuil received an invitation from the Duke of Brunswick some time ago to come to him. I was in company with the baron last night, and it was his intention to set out this day. . . .

Dear Father,

Your affectionate Son,

R. B. Jenkinson.

The invasion, which Jenkinson had followed so closely in its initial stages, was not destined to go much further; Brunswick was an unenterprising commander, and the administration of the Prussian army completely broke down under the strain of war. The troops, excellent as they were on the parade-ground, proved quite unfitted for a campaign, while they suffered much from sickness. On September 20th the invaders were checked at Valmy, and in the end Brunswick was lucky to secure an unmolested retreat. By the close of the year the position was completely reversed: most of the Austrian Netherlands was in French hands, as was no inconsiderable portion of the Rhine-

land; and many years were to elapse before, in a very different Europe, Prussian troops again set foot on French soil. Meanwhile, Jenkinson was back at his Parliamentary duties at Westminster, where an autumn session was taking place.

By this time British public opinion was slowly awakening to the significance of what was happening across the Channel, though the government certainly could not be accused of taking any step which might precipitate a conflict with France, for its policy was definitely one of what a later age would have described as appeasement. The General Election of 1790 had, as we have seen, given Pitt an increased majority, and ministers were not unnaturally feeling somewhat complacent in consequence. As late as the beginning of 1792 the Army Estimates provided for the reduction of each regiment by seventy men, which left the total force in the British Isles at no more than 13,701. When Pitt introduced his Budget that same year he had radiated optimism in a speech which envisaged the state of the national finances over a period of fifteen years:

I am not, indeed, presumptuous enough to suppose that, when I name fifteen years I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach, and which may baffle all our conjectures. We must not count with certainty on a continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval; but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment.

All the same, in spite of its efforts to reduce expenditure, the government had never economized on the Navy, and at this date there were no less than ninety-three line-of-battle ships ready for commission.<sup>1</sup>

For some time the complacency of the Prime Minister was undoubtedly shared by the overwhelming mass of his fellow-countrymen, and the change of attitude which took place was very largely due to one man, Edmund Burke. It is not easy to account for his influence over the British public, but in the last years of his life it was very considerable indeed. During the brief period in which he held office he had not been a success,

<sup>1</sup> The cost of building a 74-gun ship was £62,000, of which nearly half was for oak timber.

and he generally emptied the House of Commons when he rose to speak. His manner and appearance, too, were against him, for he had a very strong brogue; and Wilkes said of him that just as the Venus of Apelles suggested milk and honey, so Burke's oratory was reminiscent of whiskey and potatoes. The dandies of Brooks's and White's laughed at his large spectacles, ill-fitting brown coat, and bob-wig. When, however, Burke got a pen in his hand it was another matter, as was shown in 1790, the year in which he published his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, calling attention to the real significance of the progress of events in France. It was one of those books that come out just at the moment when the ordinary reader is beginning to think along the lines they indicate, and its success was instantaneous. Although it was published at five shillings, no fewer than seven thousand copies were sold in six days. The King was delighted, and told everyone, "Read it; it will do you good: it is a book which every gentleman ought to read."<sup>1</sup> As a result of the publication of this book a large section of public opinion began to move ahead of the government with regard to the attitude to be adopted towards the French Revolution.

It was little wonder. France was represented in London by the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chauvelin, a vain young man who tried to efface the memory of his aristocratic origin by intriguing with all the subversive elements in the country to which he was accredited. As adviser to the French embassy was another young man of whom Jenkinson was to have plenty of experience in later years, namely Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, but his desire to improve his country's relations with England was thwarted by the jealousy of his official superior, as well as by the impression created by the progress of events in France. After the failure of the attempt of the French Royal Family to escape in 1791, it became clear that the lives of the King and Queen were in danger, but when Lord Gower, the British ambassador, asked permission to make representations to the French Assembly on their behalf, Pitt refused it, so anxious was he to preserve neutrality. On August 10th, 1792, while Jenkinson was still on the Continent, the Tuileries were stormed by the mob, and royalty in France was suspended. Only then was

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Newman, B., *Edmund Burke*, p. 228.



Gower recalled, but solely because the monarch to whom he was accredited was no longer reigning. Before he left Paris he stressed the desire of Great Britain to remain neutral in the war which had begun between France on the one hand and Austria and Prussia on the other, but he warned the French government that any violence to the Royal Family "could not fail to produce one universal sentiment of indignation throughout every country in Europe."

As autumn deepened into winter, the repercussions of the French Revolution began to be felt in England. So early as August 14th several Englishmen had appeared at the bar of the National Assembly and congratulated the French upon the energy they had displayed four days earlier, that is to say in murdering the Swiss Guards and deposing the King. On December 13th Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, told the House of Lords that he had in his possession no fewer than ten addresses to the National Convention from British subjects. The revolutionary elements in the country had, in fact, got early to work. Five associations, at the head of which was the London Corresponding Society, in a joint address voted by five thousand people represented the English as nearly reduced by an oppressive system and gradual encroachments to that abject slavery from which the French had so gloriously emerged. "The French are already free, and Britons are preparing to become so." They assured the Convention that they considered the cause in which the French were engaged as intimately connected with their own; that they were eager to behold freedom triumphant and man everywhere restored to the enjoyment of his just rights; that they reprobated the neutrality of England in the present struggle of liberty against despotism as a national disgrace; it being the duty of Britons to countenance and assist to the utmost of their power the champions of human happiness, and to swear inviolable friendship to a people proceeding on a plan which the French had adopted.

Parliament met on December 13th, 1792, and the King's Speech referred to the necessity under which His Majesty had been compelled to embody the Militia as requiring him also to convoke Parliament immediately; to the seditious practices and disorders which were taking place; and to the manner in

which they had been encouraged from abroad. His Majesty went on to declare that he had observed a strict neutrality in the existing war on the Continent, and had uniformly abstained from any interference with respect to the internal affairs of France; but that it was impossible for him to see without the most extreme uneasiness the strong and increasing indications which appeared there of an intention to excite disturbances in other countries, to disregard the rights of neutral nations, and to pursue views of conquest and aggrandizement, as well as to adopt towards his allies the Dutch measures which were neither conformable to the law of nations nor to the positive stipulations of existing treaties.<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances he had taken steps to augment both the naval and military force of the country.

Two days after Parliament met Fox moved that "an humble address may be presented to His Majesty, that His Majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions that a minister may be sent to Paris to treat with those persons who exercise provisionally the functions of the Executive Government of France, touching such points as may be in discussion between His Majesty and his allies, and the French nation." Jenkinson strongly opposed this motion, and declared that the action of the French in opening the Scheldt "must be considered as an intentional insult to this country which cannot be overlooked without the imputation of a cowardly and base submission." He justified Pitt and his colleagues for not having earlier endeavoured to conciliate the goodwill of France, "for where persons and things were every day changing, where all rule belonged to robbers and assassins, in what quarter were they to apply? What government should they acknowledge, where there was no government? How could England recognize a constitution which the French themselves were every day violating? But, thank God, England, so long distinguished for her faithful and sacred adherence to her treaties, will not forego her respectable and useful alliances for any new allies whatever; and least of all for such allies as the French."

<sup>1</sup> On November 16th the Executive Council of the French Republic ordered Dumouriez, commander of the French armies invading the Netherlands, to take all the measures necessary "*pour assurer la liberté de leur navigation et des transports dans tout le cours de l'Escaut et de la Meuse.*" This was a violation of the Treaty of Westphalia; cf. Bindoff, S. T., *The Scheldt Question to 1839*, p. 143.

He went on:

On this very day, while we are here debating about sending an ambassador to the French Republic; on this very day is the King to receive sentence, and in all probability it is the day of his murder. What is it, then, that gentlemen would propose to their Sovereign? To bow his neck to a band of sanguinary ruffians, and address our ambassador to a set of murderous regicides, whose hands were still reeking with the blood of a slaughtered monarch, and who he had previously declared should find no refuge in his dominions? No, Sir, the British character is too noble to run a race for infamy; nor shall we be the first to compliment a set of monsters, who, while we are agitating this subject, are probably bearing through the streets of Paris—horrid spectacle—the bloody victim of their fury.

Two other subjects occupied the attention of the House of Commons at this time; one was the abolition of the Slave Trade and the other was Parliamentary Reform. In respect of the first of these Jenkinson told the House that he perfectly agreed with those who supported abolition, and he only differed from them in the means of accomplishing their end. It was his opinion that by a progressive improvement in the treatment of the slaves they would breed more rapidly, so that before long the need for further importation would cease, and in that case the trade would automatically come to an end. To any measure of Parliamentary Reform he was, like his friend Canning, unalterably opposed to the day of his death. Jenkinson maintained that variety among the representatives of the people was indispensable to secure a proper advocacy of all the varied interests of the nation. He was prepared to admit that the House of Commons, which he described as "the democratic part of the constitution," ought to be in a certain degree affected by public opinion, but in one of his earliest speeches he reminded the House that its first quality was that of a deliberative assembly, and that, if public opinion was necessarily to affect its decisions on every occasion, it would cease to be a deliberative assembly, and the members would soon be degraded into the position of mere delegates. "We ought not to begin first by considering who ought to be electors, and then who ought to be elected; but we ought to begin by considering who ought to be elected, and then constitute such persons electors as would be likely to produce the best elected."

In his first years at Westminster there can be no doubt that

Jenkinson had distinguished himself, and Pitt accordingly offered him a seat on the India Board, which he duly accepted. The Board of Control, as it was officially termed, had been set up by the Act of 1784, and it exercised all the political power formerly enjoyed by the East India Company, though the Company still retained the patronage. Thus had been established that system of dual control in India which lasted until 1858. It was not perfect, but it enabled the British Raj to survive the machinations of revolutionary and Napoleonic France, as well as such local foes as the Mahrattas and the Sikhs. In this way Jenkinson began that official career which, except during the short interval of the All the Talents administration, was to last for nearly a generation.

Events in France henceforth cast a lengthening shadow over the British scene, and although the Slave Trade was in due course abolished it was many years before Parliamentary Reform again became an active political issue. In September there occurred the massacres of Royalist prisoners, and heads which had bowed in London drawing-rooms appeared on pikes in Paris streets. In January 1793 British public opinion was horrified by the execution of Louis XVI, and a great deal more horrified than French opinion had been over a similar event in London a hundred and forty-four years before. When the news reached the English capital in the late afternoon of January 23rd, there was a feeling of universal disgust; the theatres were closed, and all who could afford it wore mourning, while in Paris "the playhouses are open and the city is illuminated every night, as if the French wished to make their wickedness more visible."<sup>1</sup>

The new leaders of France made no effort to conciliate British opinion, and at the beginning of 1793 Gaspard Monge, who under the Empire was to become a count with a Westphalian estate bringing in an income of two hundred thousand francs a year, issued a most inflammatory manifesto:

The King and his Parliament mean to make war upon us. Will the English republicans suffer it? Already these free men show their discontent and the repugnance which they have to bear arms against their brothers, the French. Well. We will fly to their succour. We will plant there fifty

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, January 26th, 1793.

thousand caps of liberty. We will plant there the sacred tree, and we will stretch out our arms to our republican brethren. The tyranny of their government will soon be destroyed.

Yet when war finally came it was not for ideological reasons. Belgium had been overrun by the French without interference, for the integrity of the Hapsburg dominions was not an object of British diplomacy. The case of the Netherlands was different, for the Dutch alliance had been one of the bases of the national policy since the Revolution, and it was the pillar of British defences in the East, for if the Cape of Good Hope passed into hostile keeping the route to India would be gravely threatened. Pitt was therefore determined to keep Holland out of the war for as long as possible, and when the Austrians and Prussians tried to draw her into their combination against France he exerted himself to prevent it. "This country and Holland," wrote Lord Grenville in November 1792, "ought to remain quiet as long as it is possible to do so."<sup>1</sup> At the same time a guarantee of British armed support was given to the Dutch in the event of attack by France. The necessity of implementing this arose over the French action in respect of the Scheldt, for negotiation proved futile; Chauvelin was accordingly given his passports, and on February 1st, 1793, France replied by a declaration of war upon Great Britain and the Netherlands. The issue was clear, though it was to become confused later: hostilities were inevitable because of the aggressive character of French policy in general, and of the threat to Dutch independence in particular.

As Pitt himself said:

We have, in every instance, observed the strictest neutrality with respect to the French: we have pushed, to its utmost extent, the system of temperance and moderation: we have held out the means of accommodation: we have waited until the last moment for satisfactory explanation. These means of accommodation have been slighted and abused, and all along there has appeared no disposition to give any satisfactory explanation. They have now, at last, come to an actual aggression, by seizing our vessels in our very ports, without any provocation given on our part; without any preparations having been adopted but those of necessary precaution, they have declared, and are now waging, war. Such is the conduct which they have pursued; such is the situation in which we stand. It now remains to

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Journal*, vol. II, p. 464.

## POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

be seen whether, under Providence, the efforts of a free, brave, loyal and happy people, aided by their allies, will not be successful in checking the progress of a system, the principles of which, if not opposed, threaten the most fatal consequences to the tranquillity of this country, the security of its allies, the good order of every European government, and the happiness of the whole of the human race.

Burke said it was "the most dangerous war we were ever engaged in," and he predicted that it would be lengthy:

We are in a war of a peculiar nature. It is not with an ordinary community, which is hostile or friendly as passion or as interest may veer about—not with a state which makes war through wantonness, and abandons it through lassitude. We are at war with a system which by its essence is inimical to all other governments; and which makes peace or war as peace and war may best contribute to their subversion. It is with an armed doctrine that we are at war.

Yet Burke was almost alone among his fellow-countrymen in his realism. There was little understanding, even among ministers, of the magnitude of the conflict upon which the nation had entered, and none of the character of the enemy. It was generally assumed that the France which had declared war was the France of Louis XV, only enfeebled from within, while the number of potential allies against her was so overwhelming as automatically to ensure her rapid defeat. That those allies would prove a liability rather than an asset; that they would be overthrown until the whole mainland of Europe lay prostrate at the feet of France; and that the enemy would produce one of the greatest generals of all time: these events could not be foreseen, but it might have been supposed that the *furia francese*, the legacy of the Revolution, would be anticipated before it was too late. Yet, although Pitt showed his realization of what was at stake, the government began to prepare for the War of the Austrian Succession.

The French, on their side, were equally confident of a speedy victory. A century of experience had proved the impossibility, having regard to the growth in the size of ships, of invading Britain from the cramped and shallow harbours of northern France, but with the deep and capacious estuaries of Zeeland and Holland in their possession the French felt that invasion might well be a practical proposition. As Maret, later Duke of

Bassano but at this time head of the Department of Foreign Affairs at Paris, put it in a letter to an English correspondent, "We are ready; our armies are there; liberty summons them; and it is in Holland that we shall strike the first blow against England." The Jacobin leaders urged the people either "to dictate peace on the ruins of the Tower of London" or to dry up the sources of England's corrupting wealth.

The theory that Britain was a highly vulnerable plutocracy was firmly held in Paris both by the revolutionary leaders and, later, by Napoleon, whose policy was to no inconsiderable extent based upon this belief. In the Convention the view was put forward by one Kersaint, a former naval officer. He declared that the English were weakened by internal discontent, and by the desire of the Irish and Scots to achieve independence. Moreover, their governing classes depended largely on foreign trade, so that if France, by a vigorous naval offensive, attacked the sources of this wealth it would soon dry up. He then proceeded:

The credit of England rests on fictitious riches, which are widespread and essentially personal. Her public wealth, restricted to the kingdom, is almost entirely in her Bank, and all this fabric is sustained by the prodigious activity of her seaborne trade. Asia, Portugal, and Spain are the best markets for the produce of her industry. We must close them by opening them to all. We must attack Lisbon and Brazil, and send an army to help Tippoo Sultan. . . . If you know how to direct the naval war it will pay the costs of the land war, and perhaps France . . . will owe to her naval victories the strengthening of her liberty.<sup>1</sup>

To pass from the general to the particular, that is to say from the roscate hopes of the combatants to their relative strength, is to view their prospects from a somewhat different angle. Britain may have been well supplied with ships, but she was woefully short of crews to man them. All through the spring of 1793 the press gangs were busy, but even so it was not until the middle of July that the Channel Fleet was ready for sea, while the North Sea Fleet was barely able to cover the passage of the Brigade of Guards, who had been sent to the assistance of the Dutch. As late as September the Admiralty was anxiously awaiting the arrival of the East and West Indian convoys

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire parlementaire*, vol. XXII, pp. 375-7.

which would provide a good haul for the press gangs. The state of the Army was even worse. Its strength was hardly sufficient to keep order at home, and its reputation was lower than it has ever been before or since. The military tradition had been lost since Marlborough's time, and the higher ranks contained an abnormally large number of incompetents. Recruiting was not rendered any easier by the uncertain attitude of a large part of the population. As for the Empire overseas, it was practically defenceless, and the garrison of so important a colony as Jamaica did not exceed eight hundred men.

Contemporaries believed that the national deficiencies would be, at any rate in the earlier stages of the conflict, compensated for by the strength and number of Britain's Continental allies, forgetting that great States are always the weaker for joining a coalition. France seemed isolated in face of the alliance of Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, Naples, Spain, and Portugal, but never were appearances more deceptive. She was aggressive and confident, and was acting on interior lines, while her enemies were divided among themselves, and a prey to internal sedition which she was continually fomenting with the greatest success for her own ends. Nor was this all, for the exigencies of her allies played havoc with Britain's plan of campaign. She was continually being called upon to meet their demands for a fleet, a landing force, or a subsidy, while she received little from them in return. The Dutch guarantee had necessitated the despatch of the Guards to defend the Hollandsdiep, where they were successful, but this led to a Flemish campaign, in which the Prussians failed to co-operate, and which ended in disaster. In the Mediterranean it was the same. The allies bargained for the despatch of a strong British fleet, so Hood had to be sent with a force that could ill be spared: this in due course involved a severe reverse at Toulon, where Napoleon first displayed his military genius, and then the occupation of Corsica, which had subsequently to be evacuated with a further loss of prestige. In short, the progress of events prevented any preparation for a definite scheme of warfare. Instead, there was a general scramble to send off fleets and armies, as soon as they could be collected, wherever they seemed to be most needed. As George III him-



self warned his ministers, "The misfortune of our situation is that we have too many objects to attend to, and our force consequently must be too weak at each place." It was not until Britain was able to act alone that she began to make headway against her foes.

The French, on the other hand, possessed the advantage not only of acting on interior lines but also of a unified command: this latter asset was at first offset by the low standard of discipline and leadership which marked the early revolutionary armies. Political sympathies rather than military abilities were the path to promotion. A few reverses soon served to convince the French government of the danger of such a policy, and Carnot began to organize those incomparable armies which for nearly twenty years were to be the masters of Europe's battle-fields. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the generals who now came to the fore were not, for the most part, corner-boys of the Revolution, but were rather men who had received their training in the armies of the monarchy.

Happily for Great Britain it was not so easy for the French to improvise sailors as soldiers at short notice. This was particularly fortunate since the republican régime had inherited a very fine navy from Louis XVI. The sail-of-the-line and frigates were, class for class, superior to the British in tonnage, speed, and gun-power, in respect of the last by one-sixth. Of French sail-of-the-line, seventy-six were rated as serviceable, and eight of these mounted from 110 to 120 guns, while the largest British, of the *Victory* class, were nominally of 100 guns. In these circumstances, and in view of its comparatively light responsibilities, the French navy almost warranted the boast of the Minister of Marine that it was the most powerful in the world. Nevertheless, advantages of *matériel* were more than counterbalanced by disadvantages of *personnel*. After killing the old naval officers, or forcing them to emigrate, the Revolution had replaced them by merchant captains and others, who were chosen by the crews on a system of indirect election. Discipline was thus undermined at its source, and mutinies often happened when an admiral or a captain gave an order which was displeasing to the crew. When war broke out the French put to sea five weeks before their opponents, but, for the reasons

mentioned, little harm was done to British commerce, and much to the French ships by repeated collisions.

It has already been shown that the new régime in France was meeting with a certain amount of support on the English side of the Channel, and both in England and Scotland sympathizers with the French Revolution became extremely vocal: in due course they met in a British Convention which was inspired by such sentiments as those of Thelwall's verses:

But cease, ye fleeing Senators,  
Your country to undo,  
Or know, we British *sans-culottes*  
Hereafter may fleece you.

Posters adorned the walls telling the people, "You may as well look for chastity and mercy in the Empress of Russia, honour and consistency from the King of Prussia, wisdom and plain dealing from the Emperor of Germany, as a single speech of virtue from our Hell-born Minister."

The revolutionary movement in Great Britain found its gospel in Paine's *Rights of Man*, and its machinery in the different Corresponding Societies and Radical Clubs which sprang up in various parts of the kingdom. Many of these were harmless enough, if republican in sympathy, but some embarked upon a course of conduct which no administration could ignore. There was a plot to seize Edinburgh Castle, and the most violent resolutions were passed expressing sympathy with the progress of events in France. Distress at home increased discontent fostered from abroad. Two bad harvests in succession raised the average price of wheat from 43s. to 75s. 2d., but no post-Revolution government dared to defy the landowners by resorting to the old Tudor and Stuart policy of fixing prices. Accordingly, in 1795, bread riots broke out in Sussex, Birmingham, Coventry, Nottingham, and elsewhere, and the Corresponding Societies and their French friends took full advantage of their opportunity. In particular, attempts were made to sow disaffection among the troops, and as these were mostly distributed in billets they were readily accessible to such propaganda.

At a large meeting held in St. George's Fields in July 1795 an address to the King was voted, and resolutions were passed

demanding annual Parliaments, universal suffrage, and, above all, peace. Three months later a crowd estimated at 150,000 assembled in Copenhagen Fields, Marylebone, to demand Parliamentary Reform, the dismissal of the ministers, and the cessation of hostilities. When the King went to open Parliament the mob greeted him with hisses and cries of "Bread. Peace. No Pitt." The royal carriage was pelted, and the glass broken. On the return journey the uproar broke out again; there was more pelting, and a very serious situation was only saved by the opportune arrival of some reinforcements of the Blues. George, it may be added, displayed the same courage that he had shown at the time of the Gordon Riots, and read his speech without the least trace of excitement: on the following evening he went with the Queen to Covent Garden Theatre, and received an ovation. The temper of the Opposition Press may be gauged from the fact that when the King went in State to St. Paul's in December 1797 to return thanks for the victories of Cape St. Vincent and Camperdown, the *Morning Post*, then the leading Whig organ, commented upon the event in the following words, "The consequence of the procession to St. Paul's was that one man returned thanks to Almighty God, and one woman was kicked to death."

In these circumstances the government had early been compelled to take powers to deal with those who favoured the enemy. A Bill was passed in 1793 against what was termed traitorous correspondence, by which was meant intercourse with France and such acts as the purchase of French stocks. There were also many prosecutions for sedition, and sentences were relatively severe both at quarter sessions and in the higher courts. One Frost, a broken-down attorney and a thorough rascal, was convicted for saying in a coffee-house that he was "for equality and no King," and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, to stand in the pillory, and to be struck off the roll. A Dissenting minister, found guilty of using seditious language in the pulpit, was sentenced to four years' imprisonment and was fined £200. Perhaps the most unsatisfactory feature of the administration of the law was the use made of spies and informers, though this may well have been inevitable in the absence of any police force. In Scotland there

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was even more ground for complaint, but it must be remembered that the law in that kingdom was always harshly construed where offences against the State were concerned, and MacQueen of Braxfield<sup>1</sup> certainly saw to it that there was no breach with tradition in this respect. His typical address to a jury was thus parodied in the *Morning Post*:

I am bound by the law, while I sit in this place,  
To say in plain terms what I think of this case.  
My opinion is this, and you're bound to pursue it,  
The defendants are guilty, and I'll make them rue it.

A man called Muir and three others were condemned to fourteen and a clergyman to five years' transportation, on not very satisfactory evidence; but when all is said and done only one man was hanged, in connection with the plot to seize Edinburgh Castle, namely Robert Watt, and his trial "displayed to the public the most atrocious and deliberate plan of villainy which has occurred, perhaps, in the annals of Great Britain," or so Walter Scott told Miss Christian Rutherford.<sup>2</sup>

In 1794 a Committee of the House of Commons presented a report on seditious practices, and on this the government brought in a Bill to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act. Pitt declared the matter urgent, and the measure passed in two days, though Fox accused ministers of a design to terrorize the people in order to shield themselves from the condemnation which they so richly deserved for involving the country in a disastrous war. In spite, however, of the Whig leader's oratory, the Opposition never divided more than thirty-nine in the Commons, while the Lords passed the Bill by ninety-two votes to seven. There ensued a number of arrests of suspected persons, who in due course were put upon their trial. The first, Hardy, a shoemaker, was brilliantly defended by Erskine, and acquitted. A more famous defendant, Horne Tooke, openly ridiculed the whole proceedings, and when he and Thelwall had also been acquitted, the rest of the prisoners were released. When it is remembered that the country was fighting for its life, these events must surely be held to constitute a high tribute

<sup>1</sup> The original of Stevenson's Weir of Hermiston.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lockhart, J. G., *Life of Sir Walter Scott*.

to the Courts of Justice as well as to the level-headedness of the ordinary Englishman at that time.

The disorders of 1795, to which allusion has already been made, led to further repressive legislation. A Treasonable Practices Bill extended the crime of treason to spoken and written words not followed by any overt act, and created a new felony by subjecting to heavy penalties anyone convicted of inciting others to hatred of the King or the established government. A Seditious Meeting Bill forbade all political meetings of which notice had not previously been given by resident householders, and empowered any two justices to dissolve a legally constituted meeting at their discretion by using the Riot Act. The first of these measures passed into law without any substantial alteration, but the second, of which the operation was limited to three years, was amended by the deletion of the clause empowering magistrates to dissolve meetings which they considered dangerous to the public peace. Neither of these Acts, it may be added, was ever called into operation.

It has been necessary to describe in some detail the events which marked the early years of the French Revolution and the reaction to them in Great Britain, because they created the atmosphere in which Jenkinson passed the early years of his public life. They made an impression upon him which was never effaced, and this explains the attitude which he adopted when, as Prime Minister, he was confronted with what appeared to be the same problem of maintaining law and order by which Pitt was faced in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

Posterity has been harder on Pitt, as it was in due course to be on Jenkinson, than was the vast majority of his contemporaries, yet it is difficult to see how he could have been expected to act otherwise. There were no police, and as revolution was a new thing there were no precedents upon which to estimate how far it might spread. In all the lands bordering upon France the disease was proving remarkably catching, and Pitt knew better than anyone else how much inflammable material was lying about in his own country. Above all, the Prime Minister had seen how, on more than one occasion on the other side of

the Channel, a little firmness would have prevented a revolution. All he really did was to overestimate the number of his fellow-countrymen who definitely wanted to see the streets run with blood (as opposed to those who merely talked about it), and that is a mistake which has been made by British statesmen both before and since his day.

There must also be taken into consideration the fact that when, more than a generation later and during a period of profound peace, the Whigs, led by those who so vehemently attacked Pitt for his alleged harshness, were in power, very different measures were adopted. The wretched labourers of the western counties burnt a few ricks to call attention to the fact that they were starving, whereupon the government of the day hanged seven of them, imprisoned four hundred, and transported four hundred and fifty-seven. To quote a modern writer: "Surely when these poor victims got to Heaven, Pitt was released from Purgatory without a stain upon his name."<sup>1</sup> It is also to be noted that all those arrested were in due course put upon their trial, and, as has been shown, some of them were acquitted: when, a century and a half later, democracy had triumphed in Britain, suspects were, during the Second World War, kept in prison for years without ever being brought before a court at all.

During these years Jenkinson was not very regular in his attendance at the House of Commons, for he held a commission in the Kent militia, and as the small regular army was so continually being employed in expeditions to the Continent, the chief responsibility for keeping order at home, in the absence of a police force, and for resisting invasion fell upon the yeomanry and the militia. Accordingly, Jenkinson was but little in London, more particularly in 1796, when his regiment was stationed at Dumfries. His letters from that town do not present a very attractive picture of contemporary Scottish customs, though nothing could exceed the friendliness of the inhabitants where the troops were concerned. Invitations to the officers to dine were as frequent as the days of the week, but, writes Jenkinson, "the style of living here is rather gross, though very hospitable. The servants are few, and very dirty;

<sup>1</sup> Hobbhouse, *C.*, *Fox*, p. 260.

but there is a great quantity of meat put upon the table, and after dinner the bottle passes rather quicker than I like."

Meanwhile, events had been taking place which affected Jenkinson very closely. On March 25th he married by special licence, as was the custom in those days, Lady Theodosia Louisa Hervey, the third daughter of that eccentric character who was at once the fourth Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry,<sup>1</sup> the lady being three years older than himself. Then, in 1796, his father was advanced to the rank of Earl of Liverpool, and Jenkinson assumed the courtesy title of Lord Hawkesbury. This promotion may well have been due to other reasons than the merit of the new earl, who had been strongly opposed to Pitt's policy of admitting American ships into the ports of the British West Indies; in this his son agreed with him, and strongly urged his father to let his opinion be generally known, since he was deeply "pledged to the public on that subject": indeed, if the older man was prepared to resign on the issue, the younger would follow his example, for he would consider any loss of office "a slighter evil than a sacrifice of opinion on such a subject." However, "there proved to be no necessity for so strong a step as a resignation of their offices. Pitt, who was unrivalled in his management of refractory or discontented colleagues whenever he thought them worth propitiating, succeeded in entirely appeasing any dissatisfaction the father may have felt, and in 1796 the agreement of both father and son with his policy on all important subjects was shown by the promotion of the first to the Earldom of Liverpool, and of the second, now become Lord Hawkesbury, to the more lucrative office of Master of the Mint, which, many years before, his father had filled under Lord North."<sup>2</sup>

By this time the progress of events in France had occasioned a split in the Whig ranks, and by far the larger portion of them was supporting the government. This development was mainly due to Burke. He had followed up his *Reflections on the French Revolution* with an *Appeal from New to Old Whigs* and *Letters on a Regicidal Peace*. As his prophecies came true his influence

<sup>1</sup> The numerous Hotels Bristol are named after him.

<sup>2</sup> Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. I, p. 34.

naturally increased, and the Duke of Portland, Windham, and others crossed the floor. Not long afterwards, in 1797, Burke died with the satisfaction of having succeeded in his object, and when Canning heard of his death he wrote, "There is only one piece of news, but that is news for the world: Burke is dead." The fact that Britain entered the war at all was due, not to sentiment, but to the French attack on Holland, which had a British guarantee; that, save for a small minority, her people entered it with enthusiasm was due to Burke.

Fox's following was purely a personal one. "There are but forty of them," said Thurlow, "but every man of them would be hanged for Fox." His charm and company seemed preferable to office and honours, and finally, it must be confessed, to the national interest itself. Thus the faithful remnant progressed from believing in fools to believing in knaves, until they finally believed in Napoleon. The effects upon the Whig party were disastrous, as Coleridge in due course pointed out. Its decline originated, he said, "in the fatal error that Fox committed, in persisting after the first three years of the French Revolution, when every shadow of freedom in France had vanished, in eulogizing the men and measures of that shallow-hearted people. So he went on gradually, further and further departing from all the principles of English policy and wisdom, till at length he became the panegyrist, through thick and thin, of a military frenzy, under the influence of which the very name of liberty was detested."

Although Portland and some of his Whig followers received office, the government which conducted the war was in reality a triumvirate of Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas. The Prime Minister still retained the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in his own hands, so that he was brought into closer contact with the various Departments than would otherwise have been the case. His cousin, William Wyndham, Lord Grenville, remained at the Foreign Office, but although he enjoyed the respect of his contemporaries, his cold and repellent personality was liable to freeze supporters and hearten opponents. Very different was the third triumvir, Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, who had been moved from the Home Office in 1794 to make way for a Whig. In addition, he was First



Commissioner for India and Treasurer of the Navy. Dundas was a jovial personage, and he took greater care of the nation's Imperial interests than his critics are always ready to allow. He knew, however, nothing whatever of military matters, and in those days there was no General Staff. In effect, the management of the war rested in the hands of the triumvirate subject to the by no means infrequent interference of the King. This, it may be observed, was in marked contrast with the concentration of power on the other side of the Channel in the hands of Carnot, the greatest genius of military organization since Louvois.

The optimism of the Prime Minister for long stood in the way of a vigorous prosecution of hostilities. "It will be a short war," he said, "and certainly ended in one or two campaigns." He regarded it as an unfortunate interruption of his peacetime policy, and it was not solely due to the difference in temperament that he made war in a fashion so dissimilar to that of his father. Towards the end of his life Pitt's attitude changed, and there was much about him that recalled Chatham, but that was not so in the earlier stages of the conflict. He was obsessed with the parlous state of the French finances, and he could not believe that a nation financially so unsound could survive a long war. There are many notes in the Pitt papers which show that he deemed a complete breakdown to be imminent. For long, too, he held the view that the French social structure was on the verge of collapse, and that the Jacobins were at least as incompetent as they were objectionable. A government whose head entertains such opinions concerning the country with which it is at war is unlikely to display great vigour in the prosecution of that war, and this was the case at the beginning of the struggle with revolutionary France.

For the most part Hawkesbury, as he must now be termed, was content to follow the government policy, though on occasions he was in advance of it. One of these was in 1794 when he had expressed the opinion that the soundest military policy would be to strike at the heart of the enemy and march upon Paris itself. For this he was much ridiculed by Sheridan, but he may well have been right, though the opportunity was soon to be lost for another twenty years. Certainly he was never dispirited

by the long series of reverses inflicted upon the arms of Britain and her allies. In 1796, for example, when Moreau had crossed the Rhine and was pressing on to Vienna, Hawkesbury said that he saw "no cause, even under those circumstances, for dejection. We are still fortunate enough to possess the empire of the sea, and the commerce of the world; and, if that can be preserved, I do not even now despair of the issue of the contest." Any appearance of discouragement, he was convinced, would "procrastinate peace rather than hasten it." Nevertheless, he was ready to follow Pitt in any attempt to secure peace on reasonable terms.

For the rest, he spoke with great effect in support of his colleagues when the occasion arose. He defended especially the Prime Minister's financial measures such as the suspension of cash payments, and the Bill for the commutation of the land tax<sup>1</sup> which the Opposition denounced as an "atrocious fraud," and as wholly unconstitutional since its object was to perpetuate a standing army. "As if," remarked Hawkesbury, "a standing army had not been kept on foot for above a century, or as if any danger to the liberties of the nation had ever arisen from it."

Hawkesbury had need of all his courage, for these years were among the most critical that Great Britain has ever known. The closing weeks of 1796 witnessed Napoleon's defeat of the Austrians at Arcola, and a French attempt to invade Ireland under the leadership of Hoche. In January 1797 came another French victory over the Austrians, this time at Rivoli; while by April the Emperor was so far reduced that he was compelled to sign preliminaries of peace at Leoben, and one of the most onerous terms was the cession of Belgium. In the British Isles there was widespread unrest, and this was aggravated by a financial crisis. The capitulation of Britain's last ally and the necessity to suspend cash payments did not, however, complete the tale of disaster in 1797, for in that same year there took place the naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, and the deepening gloom was only relieved by the victories of Cape St. Vincent and Camperdown.

The year 1798 brought a further complication for the British

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rose, J. Holland, *The Life of William Pitt*, vol. II, pp. 331-3.

government, namely a rising in Ireland; though, paradoxically enough, this took place at a time, not when English rule was becoming harsher, but when efforts, if belated, were being made to remedy Irish grievances. Hawkesbury was not directly implicated in the events which now took place, and he would not appear to have concerned himself with them, but some account of them must be given, for their immediate repercussion was to have an important bearing upon his career, while the problems of Ireland were to force themselves on his attention on more than one subsequent occasion.

Ireland, like England, was subject to oligarchic rule throughout the eighteenth century, but whereas in England the oligarchy was native, in Ireland it was largely foreign in origin. The old Celtic Ireland had either emigrated<sup>1</sup> or been driven underground by the events which followed the battle of Aughrim and the broken Treaty of Limerick. Particularly obnoxious were the laws against Roman Catholics, which prevented them from taking part in the public life of the country. The law was also harshly administered. In 1759, for example, a Catholic girl of considerable fortune was urged by a suitor to change her faith, and to avoid him she fled to the house of a friend. This friend was denounced to the authorities, and at his trial the Chancellor very aptly summed up the existing state of affairs by declaring that "the law does not presume a Papist to exist in the kingdom, nor can they as much as breathe here without the connivance of the government."<sup>2</sup> So late as 1767 a priest was condemned to imprisonment for life, and was actually incarcerated for four years, for exercising his office.

As the century drew to its close a more tolerant spirit began to manifest itself on both sides of St. George's Channel. In 1778 an Act was passed which enabled Catholics who abjured the temporal jurisdiction of the Pope to purchase and inherit land, and freed priests from liability to imprisonment. Even this relief, it is to be noted, was not effected without occasioning the Gordon Riots, so averse were the English at that time to making any concessions where Ireland was concerned. In 1793

<sup>1</sup> Paris, not Dublin, was the real capital of Ireland in the eighteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hayes, R., *Irish Swordsmen of France*, pp. 175-6.

the Irish Catholics were admitted to the franchise, and this raised problems of the first importance. It could not be long before they were allowed to sit in the Dublin Parliament, which they would then dominate by sheer weight of numbers. When this came to pass Ireland might easily side with England's enemies in time of war, or, at least, remain neutral; in either case the British flank would be exposed.

This prospect was the more terrifying in view of the power possessed by the Irish Parliament in many directions. It could express disapproval of a war or an alliance made by Great Britain, and it could refuse supplies; it could also reject a commercial compact with other kingdoms, and actually did so in 1785; it could also take a different course from the British Parliament on a constitutional problem. In effect, the tie between London and Dublin was extremely weak, and there were many reasons to suppose that in time of stress it might give way altogether.

To Pitt, who never set foot in Ireland during his life, the situation seemed to resemble that of Scotland at the beginning of the century, and by 1792 he had come to the conclusion that the same remedy should be applied, namely union with England. Actually, the analogy was false on several scores, and what the Irish Parliament required was not abolition but reform. Pitt suffered, like so many English statesmen both before and after his time, where Ireland was concerned, from being compelled to rely upon second-hand information without any personal knowledge of his own by which to check it. Had this not been the case he would have realized that the Catholic hierarchy, the most effective force in Ireland, was at least as frightened as he was himself of the effect of the doctrines of the French Revolution upon the Irish people. As it was, he formed his opinion on what he was told by successive Viceroys, who, with hardly an exception, were surrounded in Dublin Castle by Whig oligarchs ached up to their eyes with land taken by William of Orange from the old Irish aristocracy and bestowed upon their ancestors for services rendered.

Before, however, Pitt could take any definite steps in the direction of Union the worst fears of the pessimists were realized, and Ireland became a prey to invasion and civil war. In

England's extremity the United Irishmen saw their opportunity and asked the French government for help, just as their Jacobite predecessors had done a century earlier. In December 1796 this aid was forthcoming in the shape of an expedition which left Brest under the command of Hoche and included seventeen ships-of-the-line and thirteen frigates, as well as transports carrying 15,000 men. The greater part of this force arrived at the mouth of Bantry Bay "in most delicious weather," as Wolfe Tone wrote, but it had hardly got there when the wind changed and began to blow hard. Only fifteen ships managed to enter the bay, and five of them were forced by the gale to put to sea again, while the vessel in which Hoche himself was, did not arrive at all. The upshot was that no landing was effected, and on January 17th, 1797, the battered fleet returned to Brest with the loss of five ships sunk in the storm, six captured by the British off Cork, and one of seventy-four guns which had become a wreck after being driven ashore by enemy frigates off Ushant.

It may, perhaps, be pointed out that the disaster which overtook this expedition cannot disguise the fact that its conception was strategically sound and fully in accordance with French traditions. To compel England, whenever possible, to fight on two fronts had been the aim of France ever since the Hundred Years War. Originally Scotland had been used for this purpose, and even the Forty-Five was regarded in Paris in the light of a diversion to distract English attention from the main theatre of war in Flanders. Ireland, also, had for some time been included in the French scheme, and the assistance which Louis XIV gave to James II in the years immediately following the Revolution of 1688 was due to the same policy as that which caused the Directory to send Hoche to Bantry Bay a little over a century later. If, on this latter occasion, the wind had remained favourable, or the French had been better seamen, and the invaders had landed, Ireland would probably have been conquered. In any event, what actually occurred is eloquent of Britain's weakness at that time, for the enemy fleet had been able to leave Brest, remain for five days on the Irish coast, and return to its base without being seriously engaged by the Royal Navy. The significance of this attempt was

not lost upon one so interested in military matters as Hawkesbury, and he is unlikely to have been surprised when it was repeated.

The next scene in the Irish drama was the rising of 1798. It did not affect Hawkesbury at all closely, so there is no need to examine it in any detail, but there are one or two aspects of it which throw considerable light upon the Irish scene as a whole and therefore cannot be wholly ignored.

When the French were actually off the coast the United Irishmen made no move, but no sooner had Hoche returned to Brest than conspiracy became rife, particularly in the North, and by the spring of 1797 the province of Ulster was in almost open revolt. Here the leaders were mainly Protestant, whose relations with their Catholic colleagues were none too close: had the risings in the North and South been simultaneous, and had they coincided with a French invasion, nothing could have averted the overthrow of English rule in Ireland, but, as it was, the government was able to deal with its opponents piecemeal. The Southern rising, to some extent caused by the severity of the measures taken against the United Irishmen after the failure in the North in the previous year, broke out in May 1798. The insurgents had no very definite plan, and their movement was by no means universal. Connaught remained quiet, Munster was scarcely affected, and two outbreaks in Antrim and Down were easily suppressed. There was sporadic fighting in Kildare, Carlow, and Wicklow, but to all intents and purposes the serious hostilities were confined to Wexford.

The rising was marked by the most revolting atrocities, and there was little to choose between the two sides in point of savagery, though as the government forces were supposed to be supporting law and order the greater blame on this score must be attached to them. At the same time it is to be noted that the conflict was very largely in the nature of a civil war, for relatively few English soldiers were employed. The rising was crushed on June 21st, when General Lake routed the insurgents at Vinegar Hill, and for some months afterwards a terrible vengeance was taken for the outrages committed by the vanquished.

Finally, two months later a detachment of French troops under the command of General Humbert landed at Killala in County Mayo, and after occupying Ballina defeated the British forces at Castlebar. The French were disappointed at finding the insurrection was at an end, and after another victory at Collooney they surrendered at Ballinamuck, near Granard in County Longford, when, incidentally, they made no terms for the Irish who had joined them, and who, in consequence, were massacred. The expedition reflected great credit upon French arms, but it had no effect upon the course of events in Ireland. Had Humbert landed a few weeks earlier the result might have been very different. As it was, the complete lack of co-ordination between the French and their Irish friends during the years 1796-1798 saved English rule in Ireland.

The path was now clear for the application of Pitt's policy of a union of the two Parliaments, and the repercussions of this, somewhat unexpectedly, were to lead to Hawkesbury's elevation to Cabinet rank. In the meantime, however, he had found himself in disagreement with the Prime Minister on an entirely different matter.

Napoleon, whose sun was already well up on the horizon, was in Egypt, and with the best soldier of France temporarily removed from the scene, Pitt took the opportunity of concluding a convention with Russia for a joint invasion of Holland, then in French hands. On the part of Britain the main object was to capture the Dutch fleet in the Texel, and it was hoped that the Francophobe party would bring about a general rising. On August 27th a British force of 10,000 men under Sir Ralph Abercromby landed at the Helder, a point by no means suited for an invasion, but which was chosen on account of its proximity to the Dutch fleet. At first all went well, for the Dutch sailors declared for the exiled House of Orange, and some thirteen ships were duly carried off to Yarmouth. With this achievement the invaders would have done better to have rested content and withdrawn, for the Russians were late in arriving, and the delay gave time to Brune, soon to be a Marshal of France, to take the necessary measures to impede their further progress.

The first contingent of Russians arrived in the middle of September, and this raised the allied force to a strength of 30,000, of which the Duke of York was nominally in command, but in fact the Cabinet in London had ordered that all operations should be directed by a standing council of war. Two attempts, one on September 18th and the other on October 2nd, were made to advance from the bridgehead, but they both failed after heavy fighting. The Duke of York then attacked Brune in his lines at Beverwyk, but was unsuccessful in dislodging him. It was now evident that the allies, cooped up in a sandy corner of land and with winter approaching, could not force their way out, and on October 18th the Duke capitulated: he was allowed to embark his troops, but he had to restore some 8,000 French and Dutch prisoners.

This expedition roused Hawkesbury's scorn, and he wrote to his father on October 17th in the following terms:

I have for some time looked to the expedition as not likely to be ultimately successful, though I did not think its termination would take place so soon. *The day before I left London, I met Colonel Twiss. . . .* He told me he looked upon the expedition as impracticable, if the French were able to collect a tolerable army in the country: that, in the last century, the Spaniards, with the best troops in Europe, had contended for nearly forty years for this very country, and were uniformly baffled in their attempts to get possession of it; that they were successful in the countries which now compose Belgium and French Flanders, but that they were unable to make any impression on Holland. He regretted that the best appointed British army that ever was collected should be employed on a service so little likely to be profitable to the country.

I have heard that the Dutch who are here are of the same opinion with respect to the part of the country where the attack was made; and that even Abercromby did not very much like the expedition. I agree with you that our government is completely disgraced; for what can be more disgraceful to a minister than to fail in an expedition, when your troops have been uniformly victorious, in consequence of the impracticability of the country which you have chosen for your scene of action. The consequence of it all has been, that we have ruined the Orange cause, perhaps for ever; that we have given confidence to the French; and that we have already sacrificed about 15,000 British and Russian troops.<sup>1</sup> If, however, success would have led us to embark on a continental war, as *principals*, to the extent you mention, I am inclined to think it is very fortunate we never reached Amsterdam.

<sup>1</sup> This proved to be a great exaggeration.



## LORD LIVERPOOL

A week later Hawkesbury was no less critical:

If the account in the papers of last night is true, the Duke of York's convention is rather less disgraceful than was at first imagined. I agree with you, however, that the whole business is in the greatest degree discreditable. I am curious to know on whom the public principally throw the blame. The Duke of York is certainly not a fortunate nor a popular commander. Will he ever be trusted again with the command of a large army?

This last question was soon to be answered in the negative by the transfer of the Duke of York to the Horse Guards, where he showed a talent for organization in the office far superior to any performance of his in the field; indeed, his work there earned him the gratitude and respect of the whole army.

There were even differences of opinion in the Cabinet itself, though whether it was wholly proper for Liverpool to have disclosed the fact to his son is another matter. However this may be, Hawkesbury wrote to his father on November 12th:

I am not surprised that there should exist some difference of opinion among your brethren on the late events; yet their mutual interest will probably keep them together. The friends of the Duke of York will, I have no doubt, make a common cause of the whole business; and Pitt (whatever his private feelings may be) will certainly support them. I have seen several officers who have come from Holland within these few days, and I can perceive that there is a difference of opinion in the army respecting the Duke's conduct. Some blame him, others very strongly defend him. Most of the Guards are warm in his praise. The officers I have seen speak highly of Abercromby and Dundas, and likewise of Moore; but, although the other general officers showed great courage, they give them very little credit for knowledge of their profession.

They all agree in abusing the Dutch, who, they say, behaved as ill as possible, and showed the most decided partiality to the French. It is singular that for the first time, I believe, since the German war,<sup>1</sup> a sort of intercourse was kept up between our officers and the French officers at the advanced posts of the two armies. Some of the French officers sent a present to ours of two sheep, with orange ribbons in their ears.

The point which remains unexplained is the Duke of York's convention. It is agreed on all hands that the retreat of our army might have been secured by inundating the country. When Nelson was sent to Teneriffe, and the object was found unattainable, in consequence of the unexpected force of the Spaniards, he sent word to the governor that he would burn the town, and cut his way through their army to his ships, if he was not suffered

<sup>1</sup> The Seven Years War?

## POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

to re-embark unmolested. This had the desired effect. If he had been at the Helder, I have no doubt that, instead of purchasing a disgraceful capitulation, he would have made the French and Dutch restore him a proportion of English and Russian prisoners as the price of his not destroying the country. But all commanders are not Nelsons: would they were!

With the Prime Minister's Irish policy Hawkesbury was in complete agreement, and it had his unwavering support. The events of the year 1798 confirmed Pitt's belief that Union was the only solution, and he met with no opposition from the members of his Cabinet. He could not foresee that the measure which was designed to bring the two nations together was ultimately to drive them apart, yet had he reformed the Irish Parliament instead of abolishing it the later years of the century might well have seen a permanent settlement on the lines advocated by Arthur Griffith. For all his statesmanship Pitt only saw the threat to England's flank in the middle of a war, and the Union was neither the first nor the last wartime measure taken by a British government for the best but which turned out to be for the worst. One charge, however, has been preferred against Pitt which cannot be substantiated, and it is that he corrupted the virgin innocence of the Irish Parliament. One might as well talk of a negro becoming sunburnt by the English sun as of the legislature of Ireland being corrupted by Pitt. All he did was to apply on a more extensive scale the immemorial methods of obtaining a majority. He was also more successful than many of his predecessors; and on August 1st, 1800, the Union received the King's assent.

The Prime Minister had always intended that this should be followed by Catholic Emancipation, and the way for such a measure now seemed clear. In September 1800, therefore, a meeting of the Cabinet was called to consider the question, but Pitt said nothing to the King of his intentions. This was probably a mistake, but he doubtless acted in the belief that if he could first of all persuade his colleagues to agree upon a definite line of policy it would be easier to bring George round to his way of thinking. Unfortunately, when the notices for the meeting of the Cabinet went out, Lord Loughborough, the Lord Chancellor, was in attendance on the King at Weymouth, and he at once set to work to ingratiate himself with his master

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by exciting his prejudices against Pitt's proposals. Loughborough was an extremely supple politician, and in his earlier years was admirably portrayed by Churchill:

Adopting arts by which gay villains rise  
And reach the heights which honest men despise:  
Mute at the Bar and in the Senate loud,  
Dull 'mong the dullest, proudest of the proud,  
A pert prim prater of the Northern race,  
Guilt in his heart, and famine in his face.

The line which Loughborough took was to advise the King that to consent to Catholic Emancipation would be a violation of his Coronation Oath, and thereafter this became an obsession with him. Dundas, who was loyal to Pitt, tried to allay the monarch's scruples by explaining that the Oath referred not to his executive actions but only to assent to an act of the legislature. Far from having the desired effect, this argument merely elicited from the King the retort, "None of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr. Dundas. None of your Scotch metaphysics."

In these circumstances Pitt did not, for the moment, press the matter, but when he brought it up again in January 1801 he found that anti-Catholic opposition even in ministerial circles had begun to harden. Among those who were hostile to his proposals was Liverpool, and there can be little doubt but that he influenced his son in the same direction. There is no evidence that Hawkesbury had previously taken any particular interest in the question, but, as his letters show, he was a very dutiful son, and was always prepared to adopt his father's point of view. He was one of those Tories, by no means extinct at the present day, who viewed the Church of Rome with suspicion, and who did not sufficiently allow for its stabilizing influence in an age of revolution. By this time, too, the views of the King, of whom Liverpool had always been a devoted servant, were becoming generally known, and at a levee at St. James's Palace he told Windham that he regarded all supporters of Catholic Emancipation as "personally indisposed" towards him. A little later he burst out to Dundas for all to hear, "What is this that the young Lord<sup>1</sup> has brought over, which they are

<sup>1</sup> Lord Castlereagh, Chief Secretary for Ireland.

going to throw at my head? Lord C. came over with the plan in September. . . . I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such measure. The most Jacobinical thing I ever heard of."

Such being the case, it was clear that the crisis could not long be delayed, but it became more complicated than was necessary owing to the involved procedure adopted by the King, for instead of asking Pitt what were his intentions he for some obscure reason employed the Speaker, Henry Addington, as an intermediary. Addington accordingly sounded the Prime Minister as to his intentions, and in reply Pitt sent a statement of his views, which were, briefly, that he proposed the substitution of a political oath for the existing sacramental test, and also some provision for the Roman Catholic clergy. He added that if the King withheld his consent he would feel himself compelled to resign. George replied to the effect that he was bound by his Coronation Oath to refuse, and suggested that the matter should not be mentioned again: to this Pitt declined to agree, and placed his resignation in the King's hands.

There then occurred an interlude which is capable of various constructions. George accepted Pitt's resignation but suggested that the existing ministers should remain in office with Addington at their head. It soon transpired, however, that some of them would not serve under Addington, and that a reshuffle would in consequence be necessary, while the new government would be constituted on a definitely anti-Catholic basis. In view of the opinions which he held on the subject at issue, Hawkesbury felt no such qualms, more particularly as he was offered the Foreign Office, which he at once accepted,<sup>1</sup> with, it may be observed, the full support of Pitt.

At this point in the proceedings the King went out of his mind, and there was a further delay of about three weeks until he recovered his sanity. As soon as he was better he proceeded to lay the blame for his illness upon Pitt, who thereupon took the rather extraordinary course, in view of his previous attitude, of sending an assurance through the royal doctor that he would not raise the subject of Catholic Emancipation again during the King's lifetime. Different explanations have been given for

<sup>1</sup> His tenure of office began on February 20th, 1801.

this somewhat inexplicable action of Pitt, but the most probable is that he desired at all costs to avoid driving George permanently out of his mind. It is also more than likely that there was another motive behind Pitt's behaviour, and that was the conviction that the time had come to make another<sup>1</sup> effort to secure peace with France. He felt that he personally was too unpopular with the French, and too disliked by Napoleon, now First Consul, to initiate negotiations with any hope of success.

On the face of it, however, there now appeared to be no valid reason why Pitt should be replaced by Addington at all, and Canning, who put Pitt's retention of office before Catholic Emancipation, used all his power to induce him to change his mind. It was in vain. Addington had received his appointment, and showed no disposition to relinquish it; while Pitt, as Canning complained, would not, possibly for the reason already suggested, make any "forward movement towards the King," though he promised to give Addington his support. On March 14th, 1801, he finally resigned after having been in office continuously for over seventeen years. It is some satisfaction to note that the Judas of the crisis, the Lord Chancellor, was not retained in the new administration. When he died four years later the King observed, "He has not left a greater knave behind him in my dominions." On this remark being repeated to Thurlow, himself no mean judge of such matters, he observed, "Then I presume that His Majesty is quite sane at present."

<sup>1</sup> Two previous attempts to come to terms had failed.

## CHAPTER III

### FIRST YEARS IN THE CABINET

1801-1806

ONE of Hookham Frere's favourite stories was that of a peer, "a fine specimen of a thorough-going old country Tory," who came to call on his father with the news that Pitt was out of office and that Addington had taken his place. He ran over the names of all the members of the new Cabinet, and rubbing his hands with satisfaction, observed, "Well, thank God, we have at last got a ministry without one of those confounded men of genius in it." The administration which provoked this comment was constituted as follows:

First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer	H. Addington
Secretary of State (Home)	Duke of Portland
	Lord Pelham, succ. July 1801
	C. P. Yorke, succ. Aug. 1803
Secretary of State (Foreign)	Lord Hawkesbury
Secretary of State (War and Colonies)	Lord Hobart
Lord President of the Council	Earl of Chatham
	Duke of Portland, succ. July 1801
Lord Chancellor	Lord Eldon
Lord Privy Seal	Earl of Westmorland
First Lord of the Admiralty	Earl St. Vincent
Master-General of the Ordnance	Earl of Chatham, app. June 1801
President of the Board of Trade	Lord Auckland

# LORD LIVERPOOL

President of the Board of Control    Viscount Lewisham (Earl  
of Dartmouth, July  
1801)  
Viscount Castlereagh,  
succ. July 1802

The above formed the Cabinet: other members of the  
ministry were:

Secretary at War                      Charles Yorke  
C. Bragge, succ. Aug.  
1803

Chancellor of the Duchy of  
Lancaster                      Earl of Liverpool  
Treasurer of the Navy            Dudley Ryder  
Joint Paymasters of the Forces    Thomas Steele and Lord  
Glenbervie

Postmaster-General                Lord Charles Spencer  
Secretaries of the Treasury        John Hiley Addington  
and Nicholas Vansittart

Master of the Rolls                Sir William Grant  
Attorney-General                  Sir Edward Low, later  
Lord Ellenborough

Solicitor-General                  Spencer Perceval  
Lord Lieutenant of Ireland        Earl of Hardwicke  
Lord Chancellor of Ireland        Earl of Clare  
Chief Secretary for Ireland        Viscount Castlereagh  
William Wickham, succ.  
July 1802

Chancellor of the Exchequer for  
Ireland                              Isaac Corry

The administration thus contained several members of the  
previous Cabinet, and its friendly relations with Pitt were  
strengthened by the inclusion of his brother as Master-General  
of the Ordnance. The real weakness of the government lay in  
the Prime Minister himself, and his appointment to the office  
was indeed a singular selection. He was forty-four years of age,  
but had not previously held any governmental office what-  
soever. "Though he had been extremely intimate with Pitt  
from his first entrance into Parliament, his friend had evidently

not considered his talents such as would add strength to his ministry. And though, as Speaker at a time when party spirit gave rise to some scenes of unusual violence, he had raised his reputation by the tact and temper with which he had maintained the dignity of the House and the Chair, yet the qualifications for that office were very different from those required of him who was to preside over the councils of the country at a most critical period."<sup>1</sup> His rapid advancement—he was Speaker at thirty-two—seems to have turned his head, for Pitt described him as “without exception the vainest man he had ever met with,” and as “a man of little mind, of consummate vanity, and of very slender abilities.”<sup>2</sup> The ex-Premier’s own attitude, it may be noted, during the early days of the new government was one of benevolent neutrality, and it may be compared with that adopted, in not wholly dissimilar circumstances, by Sir Austen Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead towards Mr. Bonar Law’s administration.

Pitt might take this attitude himself, but he could not control Canning, who had refused office in the new administration partly out of pique and partly owing to his support of Catholic Emancipation. He attacked Addington, both in and out of Parliament, with a virulence which has rarely been equalled, and never surpassed, in British history. A good deal of the mud stuck, and Canning’s attacks are to some extent responsible for the bad name with which the Addington administration was to go down to posterity. Some of his quips have become immortal, such as the famous lines:

Pitt is to Addington,  
As London is to Paddington.

When a proposal was made to defend the Thames estuary by means of block-houses, Canning wrote:

If blocks can the nation deliver,  
Two places are safe from the French;  
The first is the mouth of the river,  
The second the Treasury Bench.

<sup>1</sup> Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool*, K.G., vol. I, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rose, J. H., *The Life of William Pitt*, vol. II, p. 477.



## LORD LIVERPOOL

As we have seen, the new Prime Minister had included his brother, Hiley, and his brother-in-law, Bragge, in the ministry, and this prompted Canning to the following lampoon:

How blest, how firm, the Statesman stands  
(Him no low intrigue can move)  
Circled by faithful kindred bands,  
And propped by fond fraternal love.  
When his speeches hobble vilely,  
What "Hear him's" burst from Brother Hiley;  
When his faltering periods lag,  
Hark to the cheers of Brother Bragge.

Each a gentleman at large,  
Lodged and fed at public charge,  
Paying (with a grace to charm ye)  
This the Fleet, and that the Army.

In more doubtful taste, not least because they came from one who was himself the son of an actress of dubious reputation, were the attempts to discredit Addington on the score of his birth:

My name's the doctor. On the Berkshire Hills  
My father purged his patients—a wise man,  
Whose constant care was to increase his store,  
And keep his eldest son—myself—at home.  
But I had heard of politics, and longed  
To sit within the Commons' House and get  
A place; and luck gave me what my sire denied.<sup>1</sup>

On May 28th, 1802, Pitt's forty-third birthday, Canning organized a banquet at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in commemoration of the event, but neither Pitt nor Addington was present. The occasion was, however, made memorable by the recital of Canning's latest poem, *The Pilot that Weathered the Storm*. The last stanza is by far the best:

And O if again the rude whirlwind should rise,  
The dawning of peace should fresh darkness deform,  
The regrets of the good and the fears of the wise  
Shall turn to the pilot that weathered the storm.

"So, in mere gaiety of heart, and thinking that it would be 'very amusing'—as he had thought, no doubt, of schoolboy

<sup>1</sup> These verses earned Addington the *soubriquet* of "The Doctor" in political circles.

pranks at Eton, of boyish escapades at Christ Church, and of the wildest vagaries of *The Anti-Jacobin*, did Canning prepare to sow the crop that he was to reap throughout his life in the estrangement of old friends, the undying rancour of enemies, and the surly distrust of the general public. 'The character for honesty and well-meaningness and so forth,' which by Canning's own admission no one denied to Addington, was, after all, a more valuable possession than all his own brilliant talents. It appealed to the mass of dull respectability which constitutes the majority of Englishmen, as Canning's impassioned eloquence and dazzling wit could never succeed in doing."<sup>1</sup> In effect, by the virulence of his attack Canning did more harm to himself than to those he ridiculed, and the measure of his failure can be judged by the fact that when Pitt took office again he was unable, or unwilling, to give Canning any more important post than that of Treasurer to the Navy.

As for the official Opposition, its attitude towards the new government was theoretically the same as it had been in respect of the old, but it found relatively little to criticize in view of the fact that one of Addington's first acts was to open negotiations with France, a course which the Whigs had been advocating ever since the beginning of the war. Moreover, a General Election in the summer of 1802 proved that the Prime Minister had the support of the country.

Such was the position of the ministry in which Hawkesbury found himself Foreign Secretary at the age of thirty. Abroad, the war had reached a stalemate. The French were supreme on the mainland of Europe, and Britain had failed to shake the enemy's position either by means of alliances or by expeditions of her own. On the other hand, every year that passed was a further testimony to the ever-growing British supremacy at sea. On the economic side a cessation of hostilities was becoming imperative. The export trade of Great Britain might have increased, but there was considerable distress at home. The average price of wheat in 1800 was 112s. 8d. a quarter, whereas the highest annual average in the fifty years before the war had been 64s. 6d. On March 25th, 1801, the price of the quartern loaf was 1s. 10½d. True to his Whig

<sup>1</sup> Festing, G., *John Hookham Frere and His Friends*, pp. 62-3.

traditions, Pitt had refused to consider any fixing of wages. Yet Britain was in a far stronger position than her rival, and during the negotiations at Amiens the First Consul<sup>1</sup> was to admit to Lord Cornwallis that France had "entirely lost its commerce and in a large degree exhausted its pecuniary resources."

What had happened was that the British Empire was becoming a self-sufficing economic unit, knit together by the operations of the navy, and able to exist and prosper in spite of the French control of the Low Countries, Germany, and Italy. British gains, too, were mostly in tropical lands which supplied vital needs, while the French successes, though superficially far more impressive, were in neighbouring countries which could ill support exclusion from the tropics. Moreover, the acquisitions of France necessitated large armies of occupation, and the expense of these could not always be met by local requisitions. Consequently, in 1801 the Finance Minister admitted a deficit of 100,000,000 francs. By rigid economies he reduced this to 11,500,000 francs in the following year, but when war broke out again in 1803 he foresaw financial ruin ahead, and he declared that it was "retarded solely by prodigies of valour and genius."

As soon as he was in office Hawkesbury was instructed by the Prime Minister to commence negotiations with France, and he accordingly got into touch with M. Otto, who was the French commissary in England for the exchange of prisoners of war. On March 21st the Foreign Secretary informed the Frenchman of the government's intentions, and offered to send a plenipotentiary to Paris or anywhere else convenient to negotiate and conclude the necessary treaty. On April 2nd he received a reply to the effect that the First Consul was glad to hear that Great Britain "was at last disposed to put an end to the misery which, for eight years, had desolated Europe," and he proposed that the negotiations should be preceded by an immediate suspension of hostilities both by sea and land. Hawkesbury at once rejected this proposal, and he had very good reasons for his action.

The first of these was that there was at that moment a naval expedition operating against Denmark in the Baltic. Bona-

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte had become First Consul in December 1799.

parte, on his return from Egypt, had induced the Tsar, Paul, to re-establish the Armed Neutrality of the North for the protection of the rights of neutrals. Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark, who formed this confederation,<sup>1</sup> duly protested against the right assumed by England to search neutral ships and to confiscate as contraband of war all the goods of belligerent Powers found in them; they also objected to English interference with neutral ships trading between different enemy ports. Paul, like his mother Catherine II twenty years before, made himself patron of this group of Baltic Powers. The British government from the beginning refused to accept these demands, and in reply the Baltic was closed to British shipping. One of the last acts of Pitt's administration had been to send a fleet, with Sir Hyde Parker in command, and Nelson under him, to force the blockade, and at the moment that Hawkesbury received the First Consul's communication he was waiting for news from the Baltic. In Egypt, too, important events were clearly pending. The army which Bonaparte had left behind there was isolated, and Sir Ralph Abercromby had been sent with a large force to conquer the country. News from there might also arrive at any moment.

Nor was this all, for Hawkesbury was too well acquainted with the First Consul's methods not to be highly suspicious of his request for an armistice; that he was justified in his attitude is proved by what had happened at Rivoli four years earlier, and this incident seems to have been in his mind in the present instance. On that occasion a part of the French army was defeated, and the whole of it was surrounded with its retreat completely cut off, when Bonaparte sent a flag of truce to the Austrian General Alvinczy asking for an armistice of half an hour, as he had some proposals to make in consequence of the sudden arrival of a courier with fresh despatches from Paris. In reality there was no such courier, but the Austrian commander, not knowing the nature of the man with whom he was dealing, granted the request. Bonaparte used the breathing-space to extricate his troops from their difficulties and to prepare for an attack which soon proved fatal to the enemy. Hawkesbury was determined not to be caught by a similar snare.

<sup>1</sup> It was modelled on that of 1780.

He was before long justified in the attitude which he adopted, for good news in due course came in. The French army in Egypt was defeated, and the clearing of that country of the enemy had begun; the Danish fleet was destroyed; and, what was more important still, the Tsar was murdered, while his son and successor, Alexander I, was a young man of twenty-four with very different views. It is true that the Treaty of Lunéville, signed a few weeks previously, was a notable triumph for France, but so far as Britain was concerned the situation in respect of her rival had greatly improved since the beginning of the year.

Hawkesbury had to tread warily in the conduct of the negotiations which now took place. He had, it is true, little ground for anxiety where his colleagues were concerned, since the government had come into office with the avowed purpose of making peace, but the King required careful handling. Fortunately, Hawkesbury had nothing to fear on this score by comparison with his predecessor. Grenville was a man of more industry than natural talent; of a style of oratory in which positiveness and assertion were usually more conspicuous than power of argument; of unbounded vanity; of immovable obstinacy; and of a most unconciliatory and arrogant demeanour, which he took no pains to soften even towards the King himself. Hawkesbury started with the further advantage that his father had worked closely with George for a number of years, and he soon earned the royal commendation. As early as April 29th, the King is found referring to him as "my excellent Northern Secretary of State,"<sup>1</sup> and ten days later he wrote to Hawkesbury:

Kew, *May 9th*, 1801,

20 m. p. 7 A.M.

The King is extremely pleased with the information he has received from Lord Hawkesbury of the intention of sending Count Bernstoff<sup>2</sup> to settle the differences between this Court and that of Denmark; the more so as it cannot but place in the most advantageous light to the public the conduct of the new administration, and more particularly of Lord Hawkesbury, as he will have the treating with the Count, who is a very

<sup>1</sup> Thus using the form of description to which he had been accustomed in the earlier part of his reign before the duties of the two chief Secretaries had been divided.

<sup>2</sup> Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

## FIRST YEARS IN THE CABINET

warm man, and it will require the good temper of the Northern Secretary of State to keep him in bounds. And it would seem that a little stiffness and restraint is more likely to end the business with credit than at first too much appearance of desire of ending the business.

George R.

A further embarrassment was the wave of pacifism which swept over the country as soon as it became known that negotiations were in progress, and this, it may be observed, in spite of previous failures of Pitt to come to terms. When, for example, in due course General Lauriston, aide-de-camp to the First Consul, arrived in London for the ratification of the Preliminaries he was dragged in triumph through the streets by the mob, a proceeding which Canning described as a scene of "disgrace to the country." This atmosphere was hardly conducive to the adoption of a strong line with Bonaparte, but Hawkesbury was not the only British Foreign Secretary who has had to carry on negotiations while the British public was doing all in its power to persuade the enemy that no demand on his part was too outrageous to be at least considered, if not conceded as soon as made.

Hawkesbury has been severely censured by modern historians not only for the provisions of the Treaty of Amiens but also for his conduct of the negotiations which led up to it. Professor Holland Rose wrote, "In no important British treaty of modern times have haste and secrecy played so prominent a part, and there is little evidence as to the motives which led to so singular a compact."<sup>1</sup> It is not easy to see why the accusation of undue haste should have been made in view of the fact that although Hawkesbury informed Otto of the government's desire to discuss terms of peace on March 21st, the Preliminaries were not signed until October 1st, while the treaty itself was not finally concluded until March 25th of the following year. It has also to be remembered that he was not a dictator, but a young man who had just attained Cabinet rank, and that the Prime Minister of the day was one of the few second-rate men to hold that office.

Parliament met on October 29th, and the negotiations with France were the most important topic to be discussed. The

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History of Foreign Policy*, vol. I, p. 305.

Preliminaries were approved, though on somewhat different grounds, by Pitt and Fox, but they were attacked by Windham and Thomas Grenville, the brother of Hawkesbury's predecessor at the Foreign Office. In the Commons the critics of the government did not venture to divide, and in the Lords they found themselves in a minority of ten, so strong was the desire to bring the war to an end at almost any price. Hawkesbury's speech in defence of the proposals appears to have made a considerable impression. The Speaker, Charles Abbot, later Lord Colchester, quotes<sup>1</sup> several of his correspondents as extolling it in the warmest terms. The next step was to send a plenipotentiary to Paris, and for this purpose the Marquess Cornwallis went to France early in November. It was not, perhaps, the happiest of choices, for Cornwallis was a man of sixty-three, by no means in good health, and certainly not of the calibre of Talleyrand, with whom he was to negotiate. Lord Malmesbury would have been a far better appointment, for he had had two experiences of French revolutionary diplomacy,<sup>2</sup> but he had latterly become so deaf as to render intercourse with the outside world virtually impossible.

The actual negotiations which led to the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens more properly belong to the history of England than to the biography of Hawkesbury, but some account of them must be given for the light they throw upon the footing on which the Foreign Secretary stood with Cornwallis. It is to be noted that diplomatic relations between Great Britain and France were resumed upon the signature of the Preliminaries, and Francis James Jackson arrived in Paris on November 16th as minister *ad interim*. He had been preceded by Cornwallis, who reached the French capital on the 7th, and had an interview with the First Consul three days later, after which he wrote to Hawkesbury:

Paris,

November 10th, 1801.

My dear Lord,

It was with very sincere satisfaction that I received your despatch of the 6th, as it has relieved me from the most delicate and difficult part of my immediate business with the Chief Consul.

<sup>1</sup> *The Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester*, vol. I, p. 376 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> In 1796 and 1797.

## FIRST YEARS IN THE CABINET

I have had this morning my first audience, at which Talleyrand was of course present. Buonaparte was gracious in the highest degree. He inquired particularly after His Majesty, and the state of his health; and spoke of the British nation in terms of great respect, intimating that, as long as we remained friends, there would be no interruption of the peace of Europe.

I told him that the horrors which succeeded the Revolution had created a general alarm; that all the neighbouring nations dreaded the contagion; that when for the happiness of mankind, and of France in particular, he was called on to fill his present station, we knew him only as a hero and a conqueror, but the good order and tranquillity which the country now enjoyed, made us respect him as a statesman and a legislator, and had removed our apprehensions of having connection and intercourse with France.

Lauriston informed me that the First Consul would see me without the presence of a third person before my departure for Amiens; but this information became less interesting to me since the good news which you have imparted to me respecting Hanover.

The concourse of people at the fireworks last night was very great; no carriages were allowed to pass but those of the foreign ministers; and as I drove through the streets I was astonished to find such a multitude so perfectly quiet, and heard nothing near my coach but expressions of civility.

I have the honour to be, etc., etc.,

Cornwallis.

When Cornwallis first arrived Talleyrand proposed to transfer the negotiations from Amiens, the place which had originally been fixed upon, to Paris, and the Englishman was at first inclined to agree to this as it would allow him opportunities of discussing matters "in confidential interviews with the First Consul himself." Cornwallis changed his mind, however, when he discovered that the object of the manœuvre was to keep the whole negotiation in Talleyrand's own hands, to the virtual exclusion of Joseph Bonaparte, who had been joined with him as representatives of France.

From the beginning Cornwallis, like all his fellow-countrymen and not even excluding Pitt himself, seems to have had no idea of the manner of men with whom he was dealing. Of Joseph, one day to be King of Naples and then of Spain, he wrote to Hawkesbury that he "had the character of being a well-meaning, although not a very able man," which was tolerably accurate, and he went on to hope that Joseph's "near connection with the First Consul might perhaps be in some



degree a check on the spirit of chicanery and intrigue which animated the Minister of the Interior." By Bonaparte himself he was completely duped, for when the First Consul told him "that it was his intention to deal fairly and openly, that he was a stranger to the arts of negotiation, and should not attempt to carry any point by cunning or chicanery," Cornwallis implicitly believed him. What the First Consul thought of Cornwallis he placed on record years later at St. Helena: "I do not believe that Cornwallis was a man of first-rate abilities: but he had talent, great probity, sincerity, and never broke his word. . . . He was a man of honour—a true Englishman"; in other words, he was just the sort of person with whom Napoleon, who was none of these things, preferred to do business. Jackson, for his part, was extremely critical of his chief, and he attributed the British concessions at Amiens to "his drowsiness, and his total want of practice and experience in matters of that kind."<sup>1</sup>

As the negotiations progressed Cornwallis began to find that articles in the projected treaty, after they had formally been agreed to, were surreptitiously altered; that in some important sentences had been omitted, while in others significant phrases had been inserted, and in one instance a change of the highest importance had been silently introduced; and finally his secretary discovered, after Cornwallis had believed the arrangements of the matters contained in these articles to have been finally concluded, the document relating to them had been carefully revised by Talleyrand, who with his own hand had made a number of corrections "replete with matter and expressions calculated to ensnare, to throw upon Lord Cornwallis himself the odium of the delay, and upon the whole to create confusion in all the proceedings."

Two instances of Bonaparte's methods will suffice. The first was in respect of Malta, which it had been agreed should be placed under the protection of the Tsar, but the relevant clause was surreptitiously altered so as to put the island under the King of the Two Sicilies, whom recent events had shown to be completely at the mercy of the French. The trick was discovered, and the original sense restored. The second instance

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury*, vol. IV, p. 71.

was eloquent of Bonaparte's attitude towards his allies, by then Spain and the Dutch. He wished to exclude their representatives from the conference, and to leave them to conclude separate treaties with Great Britain. Hawkesbury would have none of this, and told Cornwallis that there must "be one general treaty of peace, comprehending the interests of all the Powers engaged in the war, and there should not be distinct treaties concluded with each state separately." He showed by reference to the Treaty of Paris in 1763 that this course had been adopted on previous occasions, and he insisted that "the French plenipotentiary should obtain from his government the necessary full powers enabling him to conclude a general treaty of that description." The First Consul gave way, and the representatives of Spain and Holland duly appeared at Amiens.

The Treaty itself was signed on March 25th, 1802. Great Britain agreed to restore to the French all her naval conquests, namely Martinique, St. Lucia, Tobago, and other sugar islands, as well as all their ports and factories in India, and Goree in West Africa. To the Dutch she returned the Cape of Good Hope, Demerara, Essequibo, and Surinam, besides Curaçoa and several other small islands, retaining only the Dutch ports in Ceylon. Of her conquests from Spain she preserved only Trinidad. She further consented to evacuate Egypt, Malta, and Elba, the first of these reverting to Turkey, and Malta in certain circumstances to the Knights of St. John. The Ionian Isles became the Republic of the Seven Islands. By comparison, the sacrifices made by France were slight. She recovered every one of her former colonies, and shifted on her Spanish and Dutch allies the burden of loss, namely Trinidad and Ceylon. She agreed, it is true, to evacuate South Italy, but she retained all her other Continental conquests, and she continued to exercise control over the Batavian, Helvetian, Ligurian, and Cisalpine Republics.

It is small wonder that both the treaty and its authors were severely censured at Westminster. Pitt, indeed, supported the settlement in public, but he later told Malmesbury that "he had, when the Preliminaries were signed, thought that Bonaparte had satisfied his ambition, and would rest contented with the power and reputation he had acquired; . . . that, however,

all that had passed since had convinced him that he had been in error, and that the electing himself President of the Italian Republic, the attainment of Louisiana, the two Floridas, and the island of Elba, left no doubt in his mind that he was and ever would remain the same rapacious insatiable plunderer, with as little good faith, as he formerly found him to be; that still he did not regret having spoken in favour of the peace: it was become a necessary measure; and rest for England, however short, was desirable."<sup>1</sup> The King took much the same line, and during the negotiations he told Hawkesbury that the "conduct of the French could not be built upon," and when the treaty had been concluded he referred to it as "an experimental peace, and nothing else."

Others were more outspoken. Canning dilated on "the gross faults and omissions, the weakness and baseness and shuffling and stupidity of the agreement." Grenville in the Lords and Windham in the Commons criticized an arrangement which placed Malta in the hands of an Order whose total income could not possibly maintain sufficient troops to defend it, even with the assistance of a garrison of two thousand Neapolitans as provided for in the treaty; Grenville in particular described the surrender of Malta and the Cape as "purchasing a short interval of repose by the sacrifice of those points on which our security in a new contest may principally depend." Sheridan probably expressed the feeling of the country best when he said it was "a peace which all men are glad of, but no man can be proud of."

Windham moved an address to the King censuring the treaty as one which exposed the kingdom to great danger, since by it great sacrifices had been made without any compensating concessions having been procured from France. Hawkesbury thereupon sponsored an amendment to the effect that "the House was fully sensible that His Majesty had wisely consulted the interests of his people in forming a definite treaty on the basis of the Preliminaries; that it relied on His Majesty's well-known disposition to adhere with the most scrupulous fidelity to his engagements; but that it entertained a perfect confidence that he would be always prepared to defend against any encroach-

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury*, vol. IV, p. 64.

ment the great success of the wealth, commerce, and naval power of the empire. And that it was firmly persuaded that His Majesty's faithful subjects would be always ready to support the honour of his crown, and the rights, laws, and liberties of their country, with the same spirit they had manifested during the war which was now happily brought to a conclusion."

He defended the various points in the treaty to which objection had been taken, and he stressed the fact that in the course of the war France had lost more than half her fleet and all her commerce. He went on to say that the French would find it impossible to prohibit British manufacturers in time of peace as they had done in war. "Prophecies had been ventured on that the peace now made could not last. He could not pretend to say that *this treaty, or any other which might be made at the present time, was secure*; but he could not see that any additional security was to be gained by a continuance of war. Any such security must be looked for in the condition and disposition of France herself. That country now appeared to be returning to her old maxims of religion and politics, and a renewal of the war must be calculated to plunge her again into the revolutionary system. It was wise to spare the resources and spirit of this country as much as possible; they had been in some degree strained by the long duration of the war, and required to be cherished by peace."

Finally, he claimed that "he had proved that the interests and honour of Britain had been preserved, that her allies had not been neglected, and that no degrading or dishonourable article had been introduced into the treaty." When the vote was taken only twenty members were found in the lobby with Windham.

Yet when all is said and done Hawkesbury's part in the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens was a sorry beginning to his career as a Cabinet minister, for a more extraordinary document has rarely been signed by a British statesman. Britain allowed herself to be jockeyed out of the advantages she had so laboriously acquired, whereas, since the war had resulted in stalemate, the concessions should have been equal on both sides. Actually, Britain was in a relatively strong position after eight years of war, but Addington was not the man to make the

best use of his opportunities. The Prime Minister did not realize that in all bargains the man who is most warmly bent on obtaining the object under discussion is inevitably the weaker, and, with Parliament and public opinion clamouring at his heels, he made no secret of his desire for peace. It was, too, all very well for ministers to stress the commercial benefits to be derived from the peace; but they had yet to learn that the mind of the new master of France was set, not on commerce, but on power, and that the very idea of compromise was wholly foreign to his character.

Hawkesbury had thus emerged the loser from his first contest with Bonaparte, and it was not long before he began to realize the manner of man with whom he was dealing. At first the government took an unrealistically optimistic view of the situation, and proceeded to reduce the number of ships-of-the-line in commission from 104 to 32, while, not to be outdone by their rulers in the matter of wishful-thinking, some thousands of British people set out to indulge in the luxury of a holiday abroad. The First Consul appears to have acted on the natural, though dangerous, assumption that nothing would induce Great Britain to take up arms against him again; at least, no other construction can be placed upon his words and actions. By the autumn of 1802 he was already declaring that the British government wished to force upon him a renewal of hostilities which it was his great desire to avoid. His deeds were no less provocative than his words. He annexed the Duchy of Parma and the Continental possessions of the King of Sardinia. He sent troops into Switzerland to occupy the chief passes of the Alps, and he ordered the Cisalpine and Batavian Republics to put crushing duties on British goods. This was bad enough, but worse was to follow. He requested Addington to expel those members of the French Royal Family who had taken up their residence in Great Britain, and he asked for the suppression of certain newspapers which had criticized his methods of government.

To this Hawkesbury replied that he was equally "surprised at the circumstances under which M. Otto had thought proper to present such a note, at the style in which it was drawn up, and at the complaints contained in it." He then recommended

the Frenchman to withdraw it altogether, which, however, Otto did not feel justified in doing, though he consented to make some alterations in its wording. Even with these modifications the Foreign Secretary did not feel it consonant with the national dignity to make a formal reply, but, as he wrote to his father, he preferred to "instruct Mr. Merry<sup>1</sup> very fully as to the language which he was to hold in consequence of it at Paris, while he himself should adopt those measures which he judged right because they are right, and without any reference to the note." This attitude certainly commended itself to the King, who wrote:

Weymouth,  
August 29th, 1802.

It is impossible to pen a more weak and improper paper than the one delivered by M. Otto, or a more suitable answer than the one prepared by Lord Hawkesbury. The King never doubted either of the evil disposition or impertinence of the French government; but he trusts that firmness and temper will, for some time, preserve peace, which can alone be kept by this country holding a dignified language while treating with that faithless people.

George R.

In this despatch Hawkesbury showed that the government was still influenced by that desire for appeasement which had been the mainstay of its policy at Amiens, and he expressed his desire to allay the irritation which he admitted it to be natural for the First Consul to feel. At the same time, "the King neither would nor could, in consequence of any representation or menace from a foreign Power, make any concession which could be in the smallest degree dangerous to the liberty of the press, justly dear to every British subject. The British constitution admits of no previous restraints upon publications of this description. But we had courts of law, wholly independent of the executive government, capable of taking cognizance of all improper publications; bound to inflict punishment on delinquents; and which, in fact, often have punished libel defamatory of foreign governments. Our own government has no other protection than that of these same laws; and, while it is willing to give foreign governments every possible protection,

<sup>1</sup> Minister Plenipotentiary *ad interim* in Paris, April 1st to September 10th, 1802.

it can neither consent to new-model our laws or to change our constitution to gratify the wishes of any foreign Power. With respect to the Alien Act, which we are asked to put in force to expel those foreigners who were alleged to be the authors of these offensive publications, that law has only been enacted to enable the King to prevent the residence here of foreigners whose numbers or principles were calculated to endanger the internal peace of his dominions. It would be an abuse of it to exert it in the case of such individuals as those of whom M. Otto complained, and who, if they had done wrong, were amenable to other laws." In effect, if the French government felt itself affronted, why did it not go to the English courts for redress?

Hawkesbury went on. "*The demand for the removal of the French princes and other emigrants was still more inadmissible. The French had urged that we had formerly demanded the removal of the Pretender from France. There was a manifest difference between the cases. When James II first fled from England, he retired to France; and we never made the slightest demand for the dismissal of him<sup>1</sup> or any of his family or adherents from St. Germain, where, in fact, he lived and died. But when, after his death, Louis XIV, in direct violation of former treaties, formally acknowledged his son as King of England, we could no longer be indifferent to such an insult, and, in the Peace of Utrecht, we made it one of the conditions of the treaty that the Pretender himself should not be allowed to reside in France. But we never extended the demand to any members of his family or any of his adherents, though they were notoriously busy in exciting actual rebellion in England. We never required the removal even of the Duke of Berwick,<sup>2</sup> who, from his talents and principles, was the most dangerous man in the world to the interests of the country and the Protestant succession.*"

The Foreign Secretary closed on an admonitory note, by observing that the tone of Otto's communication was "far from conciliatory; and that the practice of presenting such

<sup>1</sup> This was not wholly accurate.

<sup>2</sup> Hawkesbury overlooked the fact that by 1713 the Duke of Berwick had long been a French subject.

notes could not fail to have the effect of indisposing the two nations to each other, instead of consolidating and strengthening the peace which was now happily established. It was the duty of a wise government to endeavour to allay feelings of irritation, rather than to provoke them. The King was sincerely disposed to adopt every measure which was consistent with the honour and independence of the country, and with the sincerity of its laws and constitution. But the French government must have formed a most erroneous judgment of the disposition of the British nation and of the character of its government if it expected that any representative of a foreign Power would ever induce them to consent to a violation of those rights on which the liberties of the people of this country are founded."

In spite of these strong words the British government was determined not to give the First Consul any real grounds for complaint, and when Peltier, the French journalist to whom Otto had chiefly objected, proceeded to publish articles which were not only defamatory of the person and character of Bonaparte, but were capable of being construed as incitements to murder, he was successfully prosecuted. Hawkesbury was also at pains to put the diplomatic relations of the two countries upon a more regular footing, and in September Lord Whitworth<sup>1</sup> was appointed ambassador to France, though it was not until early in December that he was able to present his credentials to the First Consul. In reply, General Andréossi was sent to London, and in connection with this appointment Bourrienne tells an amusing story:

Le soir même M. de Talleyrand vint travailler avec lui; nous étions à la Malmaison. Il fut question de la nomination d'un ambassadeur en Angleterre: le Premier Consul nomma plusieurs personnes, et dit ensuite, "J'ai envie de nommer Andréossi." M. de Talleyrand, qui n'était pas bien disposé pour ce choix, lui répondit d'un air spirituel et malin: "Vous voulez nommer André aussi! Quel est donc cet André?" "Je ne vous parle pas d'un André, je vous parle d'Andréossi; est-ce que vous ne le connaissez pas? Pardieu, Andréossi, général d'artillerie." "Andréossi! ah, oui, oui, c'est vrai, Andréossi. Je n'y pensais pas; je cherchais dans la diplomatie, et je ne l'y trouvais pas. C'est vrai, oui, oui, c'est vrai, il est dans l'artillerie."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His instructions may be found in Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. I, pp. 93-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires sur Napoléon*, vol. IV, pt. 22, p. 343.



The Parliament which in due course met on November 16th was a new one, and in it Hawkesbury again represented Rye. Of it he wrote to his father:

The House was rather flat, but this I have observed is generally the case with a new Parliament; a great proportion of the members who attend being new members, who are unacquainted with the ways of the House, and who cannot be expected to give much encouragement to either party. There is certainly much room for political intrigue, as there are various parties in the House, and each of them inclined to pursue a system of its own. I understand, however, from Mr. Addington, that his assurances of support from country gentlemen are as satisfactory as he could possibly expect.

The conduct of government with respect to France is certainly approved of in general, both in and out of Parliament. The prevailing sentiment appears to be considerable irritation with respect to the conduct of France, but a strong desire to avoid war if possible. Our next debate will probably take place on the army estimates. It is intended to vote very large establishments: 35,000 men will be proposed for Great Britain, 25,000 for Ireland, 5,000 for Jamaica, 10,000 for the Leeward Islands, 8,000 for Gibraltar and Malta, 7,000 for North America, and Canada, and 14,000 for the East Indies. Sanguine hopes are entertained that, from the flourishing state of the revenue, a force to this extent may be kept up without the necessity of imposing any new taxes, or at least without imposing any that can be material.

About the same time Addington was saying to Malmesbury that so far as France was concerned he was resolved to wait "till she had heaped wrong upon wrong, and made her arrogant designs so notorious, and her views of unceasing aggrandizement so demonstrable, as to leave no doubt on the public mind, nor a possibility of mistake on the part of the most uninformed pacific man."<sup>1</sup>

Events were clearly working up to a climax, and this came, as was not unexpected, over the question of Malta. The Knights of St. John were not yet ready to return to the island, but Bonaparte insisted that the British troops should nevertheless be withdrawn at once. In view of the fate of Parma and Sardinia, this would have been tantamount to handing Malta over to the French, and Hawkesbury had no difficulty in persuading his colleagues to refuse to agree. The storm then broke, and there occurred the scene at the Tuileries which has

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury*, vol. IV, pp. 246-7.

become historic. During a public audience on March 13th, 1803, Bonaparte, after enquiring from Whitworth whether he had received any news from home, broke out with the words, "And so you are determined to go to war." What ensued has been described by the ambassador himself:

"No, First Consul," I replied, "we are too sensible of the advantages of peace." "We have," said he, "been fighting these fifteen years." As he seemed to wait for an answer, I observed only, "That is already too long." "But," said he, "you desire to fight for fifteen years more, and you are forcing me to do it." I told him that was very far from His Majesty's intentions. He then proceeded to Count Morcoff and the Chevalier Azzara, who were standing together at a little distance from me, and said to them, "The English are bent on war, but if they are the first to draw the sword, I shall be the last to put it back into the scabbard. They do not respect treaties. They must be covered with black crape." I suppose he meant the treaties. He then went his round, and was thought by all to whom he addressed himself to betray great signs of irritation.

In a few minutes he came back to me, to my great annoyance, and resumed the conversation, if such it can be called, by something personally civil to me. He then began again, "Why these armaments? Against whom these measures of precaution? I have not a single ship of the line in the French ports; but if you wish to arm, I will arm also; if you wish to fight, I will fight also. You may perhaps kill France, but will never intimidate her." "We wish," said I, "neither the one nor the other. We wish to live on good terms with her." "You must respect treaties then," replied he. "Woe to those who do not respect treaties; they shall answer for it to all Europe." He was too agitated to make it advisable to prolong the conversation; I therefore made no answer, and he retired to his apartment, repeating the last phrase.

The object of this outburst was to work French opinion up in favour of war, and to place the responsibility upon Britain. Such leading Frenchmen as Talleyrand, Fouché, and Joseph Bonaparte were strongly in favour of peace, but their opinions counted for nothing against the determination of the First Consul either to humiliate England or to fight her. In London pacifism was the order of the day up to the very last moment, for as late as April 3rd the French ambassador was writing to Bonaparte, "The prayers, the needs, and the wishes of this country are for peace." The following day he returned to the subject: "Everybody wants peace. By preserving the peace of Europe you will crush this country without appealing to the arbitrament of the mailed fist . . . and you are in a most

favourable position to decide the world's destiny for all time."<sup>1</sup>

The reasoning was sound, but the advice was rejected. Yet by conceding a few points to Britain and concentrating on his navy Bonaparte would soon have had the world at his feet. However, he looked at the problem from the point of view of a soldier, not from that of a statesman, while, as in the case of so many dictators, no advantage meant anything to him unless it had been obtained by force. For the successful prosecution of his designs in the East he must secure control of the Mediterranean, and for this he must obtain possession of Malta: therefore he was prepared to fight for Malta. In these circumstances it is in no way surprising that war between Britain and France should have begun again in the middle of May 1803.

Hawkesbury had little difficulty in persuading the House of Commons to agree with the action of the government in instructing Whitworth to ask for his passports, but of what he actually said nothing is known, for owing to some oversight the ordinary visitors overflowed into the seats usually occupied by the reporters, so the debate was not taken down. Charles Grey, later Lord Howick, and then Earl Grey, in a letter to his wife, put the Opposition point of view, which was almost certainly unfair to Hawkesbury:

London,

May 17th, 1803.

We are now actually at war, and we can only say God send us a safe deliverance! which under such Ministers can hardly be hoped. Hawkesbury, in moving to have the King's message taken into consideration on Monday next, was absolutely convulsed with fear and could hardly articulate from the violence of his agitation; and to make the thing quite ridiculous Addington appeared in the full dress of the Windsor Uniform, and strutted up the House in the midst of a burst of laughter just as the Speaker was reading the *Medicine Act* a second time.<sup>2</sup>

Pitt spoke from the third row behind the Treasury Bench, and, as Canning wittily put it, he fired over the heads of the ministers. He neither praised nor blamed them, but denounced the aggressions of the First Consul. Contemporaries described the speech as one of the finest he ever made. Grey said of it, "Pitt made one of the most inflammatory speeches that ever

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Coquelle, P., *Napoleon and England*, pp. 53-7.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Trevelyan, G.M., *Lord Grey of the Reform Bill*, p. 130.

was heard, and has plunged the country into another war of ten years. I answered him, and under all the disadvantage of speaking to a House preoccupied and inflamed by one of the most magnificent pieces of declamation that ever was made." When the vote was taken the government had a majority of 398 to 67.

At the end of the session Addington took the remarkable step of removing Hawkesbury to the House of Lords by getting him called up in his own right. It was an ill-judged act, for the ministry was beginning to lose ground in the Commons, where its critics were some of the most formidable in British Parliamentary history. Pitt's support was becoming occasional, and Addington by himself was quite incapable of dealing with Fox, Canning, Sheridan, and Grey, whereas Grenville was the only dangerous opponent in the Upper House, and for him the Chancellor was more than a match. Neither Liverpool nor Hawkesbury approved of this elevation, but the Foreign Secretary felt that it was his duty to fall in with the Prime Minister's wishes.

As the year drew to a close there were to be observed all the signs of an impending political crisis. It was not so much that the government had made any serious mistakes, except where finance was concerned, as that it was patently incompetent. Grenville took the lead in the efforts to overthrow Addington, and when Pitt still hesitated he came to an understanding with Fox. At this point the King's mind became unhinged once more, and at one of the most perilous moments in its history the country was not only leaderless but a prey to every sort of political intrigue. With George's recovery in the spring Pitt felt that it would not be in the national interest for him to delay any longer, and on April 23rd, 1804, the Treasury Bench had to face the combined thunders of Pitt and Fox, and so ineffective was the government in reply that its majority fell to thirty-seven. The end had come, and Addington advised the King, who was now convalescent, to send for Pitt.

There then ensued a series of complicated manœuvres which the country, at grips with Bonaparte, who on May 18th, 1804, became Emperor of the French, could ill afford. The intrigue at Court was considerable, as can be seen by an extract from

a letter which Liverpool wrote on July 8th to his cousin Dr. Cornewall, then Bishop of Hereford:

The Queen and the Duke of York were in open hostility with the Prince of Wales, and had no intercourse whatever. The Dukes of Cumberland and Cambridge attached themselves to the Duke of York, the Duke of Clarence to the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Kent acted a doubtful part between them. The Queen and the Duke of York were apprehensive that the administration which then existed<sup>1</sup> was not sufficient to support them, in case of events, against the heir apparent, and wished therefore that it should be strengthened, particularly by Mr. Pitt. They therefore contributed to bring about the change, though the King was always firm in support of Mr. Addington.

The state of the King's health was then, and continues to be, precarious; according to the physicians, his bodily health is such as to promise a long life, and they are of opinion they shall cure him of any mental derangement, if he will comply with what they shall advise. The notes which he writes (of which I have seen a great number) are not only wise and discreet, but excellent. His conversation, also, and behaviour are perfectly good when he is in the company of those for whom he feels any respect. But when he gets into the company of the female part of his family, or among his servants in the stables, his conversation is not certainly such as it ought to be; and he marked this particularly in the only visit he has paid to Windsor; so that he is to go there no more, and I believe he will live principally at Kew. He has promised to conform to the rules prescribed by the physicians, and I incline to think he will now do so.

On the other hand, the Prince of Wales has never seen his father, mother, sisters, or brothers that are attached to that part of the Royal Family. He obtains, however, information of what passes amongst them, as is supposed, through the Duke of Kent, and probably through other quarters. He declares himself in direct hostility to the Government that has been formed, and, by way of making friends, gives great dinners to all that he thinks may be gained. He professes that he will not take a temporary regency, but that he must have it for good, and without limitation, if he has it at all. He propagates unfavourable accounts of his father's health, and calls upon certain persons now in power, even by letter, not to trust to the reports of physicians alone, but to bring the business before Parliament. He is, as I take it, very much in the hands of Lord Moira and Mr. Fox; but I do not think that any of the others, though they wish to avail themselves of his influence for the destruction of those who are now in power, are much connected with him.

Pitt, in these circumstances, certainly had a disappointment in store for him when he had his audience at Buckingham House on May 7th, for he found the King still thinking in terms

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Addington's.

of the Test Act, the Coronation Oath, and the shortcomings of Fox. Pitt's previous undertaking stood in the way of any attempt to secure Catholic Emancipation, and every effort to make the new government really representative by the inclusion of Fox was vetoed by the King. Pitt showed now that he had at last overcome his animosity to his rival, but it was all to no purpose. Grenville, too, would not take office without Fox, to whom, incidentally, he had been violently opposed during by far the greater part of his political life.

As to Hawkesbury's part in the change of government a full account of it was given by his father to the Bishop of Hereford in a letter immediately subsequent to the one just quoted:

When Mr. Pitt determined to form an administration out of his own friends and of a certain number of Mr. Addington's coadjutors, he sent Mr. Charles Long<sup>1</sup> to Lord Hawkesbury to propose a meeting with him. At this conference Mr. Pitt said that Lord Hawkesbury was to continue Secretary of State, but asked him if he would have any objection to change his department if Lord Moira could be gained, and he should prefer to have the Foreign Department. Lord Hawkesbury, who is attached to this department, and the members of which were much attached to him, objected, and stated his objections, but at last gave way if Lord Moira could be gained. When Lord Hawkesbury told me of this, I did not much object to the consent he had given if the change was founded on the acquisition of such a person as Lord Moira, who, from his connection with the Prince, was of great importance. The experiment was tried, by letters written to Lord Moira, but it wholly failed.

Mr. Pitt then saw Lord Hawkesbury again, and said he could not bring Lord Harrowby into his Cabinet unless he made him Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, for his health was so infirm that he could not execute any other, and that Lord Hawkesbury must continue to have the management of the House of Lords. Mr. Pitt assigned no other reason. Lord Hawkesbury again objected as before, but in the end acquiesced, for the reason stated to him. When Lord Hawkesbury acquainted me with this, I expressed great dissatisfaction, for I did not think that Lord Harrowby was a man either of the importance, the talents, or the knowledge of business, that Lord Hawkesbury was to leave his office merely for his lordship's accommodation. The point, however, had been decided, and nothing further could be said. I had, in truth, some presentiment of what afterwards happened. Lord Hawkesbury went, however, into the Home Department.

The King was, I am persuaded, informed of the sentiments which I entertained on this subject, and on this account he first conveyed to me,

<sup>1</sup> Later Lord Farnborough. Joint Secretary to the Treasury in Pitt's previous administration.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

through Sir Joseph Banks, that he preferred having Lord Hawkesbury in his new situation; that he thought it a situation of more importance, and that it brought him more frequently into his Majesty's presence, so that he should be more nearly connected with him. Shortly after this, his Majesty further marked his confidence in me, and his wish to reconcile me to the change, by sending me all the correspondence which had passed between Mr. Pitt and others, in consequence of this change of administration; and I had reason to conjecture that the King placed very great personal confidence in Lord Hawkesbury.

The new Cabinet was composed as follows:

First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer	William Pitt
Secretary of State (Home)	Lord Hawkesbury
Secretary of State (Foreign)	Lord Harrowby
	Lord Mulgrave, succ. Jan. 1805
Secretary of State (War and Colonies)	Earl Camden
	Viscount Castlereagh, succ. July 1805
Lord President of the Council	Duke of Portland
	Viscount Sidmouth, <sup>1</sup> succ. Jan. 1805
	Earl Camden, succ. July 1805
Lord Chancellor	Lord Eldon
Lord Privy Seal	Earl of Westmorland
First Lord of the Admiralty	Viscount Melville <sup>2</sup>
	Lord Barham, succ. May 1805
Master-General of the Ordnance	Earl of Chatham
President of the Board of Trade	Duke of Montrose
President of the Board of Control	Viscount Castlereagh
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Lord Mulgrave
	Earl of Buckinghamshire, succ. Jan. 1805
	Lord Harrowby, succ. July 1805

<sup>1</sup> The former Prime Minister, Addington.

<sup>2</sup> Previously H. Dundas.

# FIRST YEARS IN THE CABINET

Other ministers were:

Secretary at War	William Dundas
Treasurer of the Navy	George Canning
Joint Paymasters of the Forces	George Rose and Lord Charles Somerset
Secretaries of the Treasury	William Huskisson and W. S. Bourne
Master of the Rolls	Sir William Grant
Attorney-General	Spencer Perceval
Solicitor-General	Sir Thomas Manners Sutton
Lord Lieutenant of Ireland	Earl of Hardwicke
	Earl Powis, succ. Nov. 1805
Chief Secretary for Ireland	Sir Evan Nepean
Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland	Isaac Corry

The new administration was decidedly weak. There were no less than twelve members of the Cabinet, but, with the exception of Pitt, none of them was remarkable for his abilities except Castlereagh and Eldon. As the composition of the ministry was in the nature of a compromise, the strong partizans had to be relegated to minor posts, and such was the fate of Canning. In effect, the team was a poor one, which meant that much even of the routine work would have to be done by the Prime Minister, who was already overburdened with the conduct of the war.

Hawkesbury had not been long at the Home Office before there was a violent, if short-lived, disagreement between Canning and himself. As we have seen, Canning had been one of the leading critics of the Treaty of Amiens, but he had been careful not to attack Hawkesbury personally since he regarded him as having "merely held the pen,"<sup>1</sup> the real culprit being Addington. In the debate in June on the Additional Forces Bill, however, Canning attempted to vindicate his own consistency in taking office with so many of those who had been members of the previous ministry by affirming that there had

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bagot, J., *George Canning and His Friends*, vol. I, p. 69.



been a great and general change of policy. "I objected," he told the House, "to the administration of foreign affairs; that has been changed." He then continued, "I objected to the naval administration; that has been changed." In view of the fact that Pitt had censured Addington's want of vigour in naval matters, this observation on the part of Canning was calculated to convey the impression that the Prime Minister also took exception to Hawkesbury's conduct at the Foreign Office.

It was only to be expected that Hawkesbury should resent both the attack and the implication that Pitt shared Canning's views, but he was never one to act precipitately, and, as he told his father, he determined "to take no step in the business till after twenty-four hours' consideration." At the end of that time, however, he wrote to the Prime Minister reminding him that "the change from the Foreign to the Home Department had been proposed by Pitt solely on the ground of personal accommodation. That he himself had plainly declared it to be contrary to his own wishes and feelings, which, however, he was willing to sacrifice for the convenience of the Prime Minister himself in making his arrangements; and that from the first he had been fully aware of the construction which any Opposition might be expected to take of it. These consequences he had been prepared to disregard. But now, after this construction had been publicly sanctioned by a member of the Government supposed to possess a considerable share of Pitt's personal confidence, he felt that, consistently with what he owed to his own honour and reputation, he could no longer continue a member of the Government." At the same time he assured the Prime Minister that his resignation would not make any difference to his determination to give continued support to the administration.

Pitt, in reply, fully agreed with Hawkesbury's account of his transfer from the Foreign to the Home Office, and as soon as it was brought to Canning's notice that his old friend had taken exception to the implications of his speech he flatly denied that he ever intended any such construction to be put upon it: he also tendered his resignation to the Prime Minister. The long-suffering Pitt, assisted by one or two of Hawkesbury's and Canning's contemporaries, then proceeded to mediate, and

peace was soon made. "The transaction redounds to the credit of both, of Canning as well as of Lord Hawkesbury. For it is only with men of really fine and generous dispositions that a reconciliation, after a dispute of so serious a kind, can be so complete as to leave no soreness behind it. But it was such in this instance. They at once returned to their former habits of cordial intimacy: which was never again interrupted."<sup>1</sup> All the same, the incident was regarded by contemporaries as further proof of the contention that Canning was a thoroughly intractable colleague.

On the day that Pitt took his seat after re-election, which was then obligatory on acceptance of office, the First Consul became an Emperor. "The two protagonists now stood face to face—Napoleon, Emperor of the French, President of the Italian Republic, Mediator of the Swiss Republic, Controller of Holland, absolute ruler of a great military Empire; Pitt, the Prime Minister of an obstinate and at times half-crazy King, dependent on a weak Cabinet, a disordered Exchequer, a Navy weakened by ill-timed economies, and land forces whose martial ardour ill made up for lack of organization, equipment, and training."<sup>2</sup>

Napoleon, as Bonaparte must now be termed, might be crowned Emperor of the French, but he was as far from London as ever, and public opinion in France was becoming restive. On the night before his coronation the walls of Paris were adorned with posters announcing "The last Performance of the French Revolution—for the Benefit of a poor Corsican Family," and the wits of the capital were already referring to the new Emperor as *Don Quixote de la Manche*, while Brunet, the actor, delighted his audiences by cracking nuts on the stage with the comment, "*Je fais des péniches*." In consequence Napoleon became more than ever desirous of accomplishing his purpose. "Let us," he wrote, "be masters of the strait for six hours, and we shall be masters of the world."

In face of this threat of invasion the responsibility of the Home Secretary<sup>3</sup> was great, and much of Hawkesbury's corre-

<sup>1</sup> Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. I, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Rose, J. H., *The Life of William Pitt*, vol. II, p. 505.

<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered that he was also Leader of the House of Lords, so that the general business of the government passed through his hands.

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spondence with the King during the year 1804 refers to the measures which would be necessary if it materialized. On August 14th he wrote to his father, "From intelligence which has lately reached us we are inclined to believe that the attempt of invasion will soon be made. Their preparations are very great; and they have stopped building, which looks as if they considered them complete. They have about 3,000 vessels of different descriptions, and 180,000 men between Ostend and Cherbourg." Hawkesbury was at this time in attendance upon the King at Weymouth, and under date of September 2nd Liverpool wrote to Sir Joseph Banks, "I heard for the first time to-day from my son at Weymouth: the King has treated him there very kindly. His Majesty has taken him into his house, and furnished him with horses and everything."<sup>1</sup> Hawkesbury's anxieties can scarcely have been lessened by the avowed intention of the King to take the field in person in the event of a French landing, for in November of the previous year the Sovereign had written to the Bishop of Worcester<sup>2</sup>:

Windsor,

November 30th, 1803.

My good Lord,

. . . . We are here in daily expectation that Buonaparte will attempt his threatened invasion, but the chances against his success seem so many that it is wondered he persists in it. I own I place that thorough dependence on the protection of Divine Providence, that I cannot help thinking the usurper is encouraged to make the trial that his ill-success may put an end to his wicked purposes. Should his troops effect a landing, I shall certainly put myself at the head of mine, and my other armed subjects to repel them; but as it is impossible to foresee the events of such a conflict, should the enemy approach too near to Windsor, I shall think it right the Queen and my daughters should cross the Severn, and shall send them to your episcopal palace at Worcester. By this hint I do not in the least mean they shall be any inconvenience to you, and shall send a proper servant and furniture for their accommodation. Should such an event arise, I certainly would rather that what I value most in life should remain during the conflict in your diocese and under your roof, than in any other place in the island.

Believe me ever, my good Lord,

Most affectionately yours,

George R.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MS. letter in the possession of J. W. F. Hill, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Hurd.

<sup>3</sup> Jesse, J. H., *Memoirs of the Life and Reign of George III.*, vol. III, p. 330.

The King was, however, never to have the opportunity of pitting his strategy against that of Napoleon.

George was not the only member of the Royal Family whom Hawkesbury found an embarrassment at this time, for the affairs of the Prince of Wales constituted an even greater liability. Their ultimate solution, of course, rested with the Prime Minister, but Hawkesbury, as Home Secretary, was officially concerned, and what he now learnt about the relations of the King and the Heir Apparent was to prove extremely useful to him when he was in Pitt's shoes. The problem was complicated, as problems connected with "Prinny" were liable to be. First of all there was his natural and laudable desire to take an active part in the defence of the country in the event of invasion. As a youth the Prince had been appointed a Colonel in the Army, and later was made Colonel of the 10th Light Dragoons, now the 10th Hussars. He always took a great interest in this regiment, and he sometimes went to camp with them; but no other appointment came his way. "My next brother, the Duke of York," he wrote to the King, "commands the Army; the younger branches of my family are either Generals or Lieutenant-Generals; and I, who am Prince of Wales, am to remain Colonel of Dragoons." George, however, remained adamant, and the Prince's only consolation was, as he told Fox, that "the King desired me to be on his right hand whenever he took the field."<sup>1</sup> In his fury, the Prince sent the whole correspondence to the Press, which did nothing to commend him to his father on the one hand, or on the other to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, who had to answer questions in Parliament.

Less creditable were the Prince's attempts to use his eight-year-old daughter, Charlotte, as a pawn in his quarrels with his wife. It is true that the behaviour of the Princess of Wales left a great deal to be desired, but the character of her husband was such that he had no moral justification for criticizing her. The King had every reason for desiring that his grandchild, who would apparently one day be Queen of England, should

<sup>1</sup> "It is difficult to stifle a regret that Napoleon did not succeed in invading England to be met by this odd, but gallant, couple prancing at the head of the English levies." (Fulford, Roger, *George the Fourth*, p. 85.)

be removed from the control of this ill-assorted couple, and the Prince wished to utilize his father's desire for the purpose of furthering his own ends, and into this unhappy controversy Pitt and Hawkesbury were of necessity drawn. In the end, after a discussion of several months, the Prince gave way, and consented to allow the King to have the sole and exclusive care of Princess Charlotte. He continued, however, to speak most irreverently of his father in private, and he dwelt with extreme satisfaction on the infirm state of the King's mental health.

Another problem, of a very different nature, demanded the Home Secretary's attention at this time, and that was Trade Unionism. In 1804 this was a movement of recent growth, and it was eyed with a good deal of suspicion in many quarters owing to the resemblance which the Unions bore to the various societies that had come into existence in the last decade of the previous century to acclaim the French Revolution and its principles. Employers disliked the movement for other reasons as well, and they asked the Home Office to prosecute its leaders for illegal practices. Hawkesbury naturally referred the matter to the Attorney-General, Spencer Perceval, and his reply may, perhaps, be quoted in full as possibly the first official pronouncement on a subject which has since attained so much importance.

*October 5th, 1804.*

My Lord,

I have had the honour of receiving your Lordship's letter of the 22nd ult., accompanied with several papers relative to the combination formed by the boot and shoe makers in the metropolis, which your Lordship thereby submitted to the consideration of the Solicitor-General and myself, who were requested to state an opinion as to the steps most proper to be taken thereon.

These papers contain a statement of a very extensive combination existing among the boot and shoe makers in the metropolis, who are in correspondence, by means of delegates, committees, and otherwise, with similar combinations, or rather branches of the same combination, in different parts of the kingdom. This system seems to be established upon the plan acted upon by the Corresponding Society, and other united Societies, which have been found to act with such mischievous concert, in England, Scotland, and Ireland, upon political points which were the objects of the union; and there appears to be no doubt that the plan of the present combination is capable of being applied in support of any object to which they may be disposed to direct it.

The present objects seem to be the increase of wages, some regulation with respect to the number of apprentices, and imposing an obligation upon the masters to employ no journeyman who, as not being a member of the combination, or refusing to comply with its rules and submit to its authority, had made himself obnoxious to its members. This latter object, it is plain, is immediately directed to the establishment of the strength of the society, by putting into their hands the means of compelling every journeyman in the trade, and through the journeymen, every master in the trade, to submit to their terms under peril of ruin, by loss of employment to the journeymen, and loss of workmen to the masters.

The general evidence of the existence of such a system seems to be very strong and convincing; but it is not given with that detail and particularity with regard to individuals as to enable me to point out to your Lordship the persons whom (if it should be thought fit for Government to take it up as a subject on which they could direct a prosecution) it would be proper to select as objects of that prosecution. But the papers contain the offer of more information, and I think it may be reasonably concluded, from what they contain, that sufficiently particular information against individuals might be procured.

Upon the point of law, I have no difficulty in stating to your Lordship that the combination is illegal, and that the parties, if particularized by such evidence as I above suppose to be within reach of being procured, are liable to be prosecuted for a misdemeanour.

With respect to the policy of Government's instituting such a prosecution, my mind is in too great a degree of doubt to permit me to state any opinion, or to do more than to submit it to your Lordship and his Majesty's Government to determine it, suggesting some of the considerations which create my doubts.

If the effect of prosecuting or not prosecuting by Government was to begin and end with this case alone, it might perhaps be immaterial who carried on the prosecution. The source of evidence is opened to Government, and the public prosecutor would probably be able to procure sufficient evidence to convict. But as it will be viewed as a precedent of what the masters in this trade, and in others, will expect Government to do in future, it seems to me to deserve very serious consideration. For it is not only to be collected from these papers, but it is otherwise too notorious, that similar combinations exist in almost every trade in the kingdom. And if Government attends to this application on the part of the boot and shoe makers, similar applications must be expected from every other trade, and it will lead to an opinion that it is not the business of the masters of the trade, who feel the injury, to prosecute, but that it is the business of the Government. And it seems to admit of no doubt, but that either as regards the authority and weight of the masters, or the facility of securing evidence to prosecute with effect, such prosecutions had better be in the hands of the masters than of Government.

It must be admitted, indeed, that the offence has grown to such a

height, and such an extent, as to make it very discouraging for any individual to institute a prosecution; as the persons whom he would prosecute would be supported at their trial, and during their imprisonment, by the contributions of their confederates, and his own shop would possibly be deserted by his workmen. But then it is clear that it is owing to the inertness and timidity of the masters that the conspiracy has reached this height, and it may well be feared that this inertness will be rather increased than diminished by the interference of Government.

The same timidity which disposes each at present to wish to leave it to some other parties to prosecute, lest by prosecution they should lose their workmen, will dispose them to leave to others the equally, if not more, obnoxious duty of informing: and when they once think the punishment of such offences to be the business of Government, they will think it also the business of Government to procure the evidence, and not theirs to give it; so that the future detection and prosecution of such offences would probably be rendered more difficult. Besides, in all these cases there are always, whether well founded or not, complaints on both sides, and the impartiality of Government would be awkwardly tested if, after undertaking a prosecution, at the instance of the masters, against the conspiracy of the journeymen, they were to be applied to on the part of the journeymen to prosecute the same masters for a conspiracy against their men.

These are some of the considerations which lead me to doubt whether it would or would not be politic to institute a prosecution by the public in this case; and I take leave to submit them to your Lordship's better determination. Upon the illegality of this conspiracy I have had an opportunity of knowing that the Solicitor-General agrees with me, but not having been able to see him since I have read the papers myself, and being pressed by the persons who submitted these papers to your Lordship not to delay my opinion upon them, I have reflected upon the whole of the case without waiting to confer with the Solicitor-General upon the expediency of Government engaging in the prosecution.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble Servant,

Sp. Perceval.

In the light of the Attorney-General's opinion Hawkesbury refused to institute such a prosecution as had been desired, and the matter was allowed to drop. The Trade Union leaders seem to have become acquainted with Perceval's views, and when they realized that they were acting illegally they modified their attitude.

Before the end of the year Hawkesbury was able to do the Tory party a great service in repairing the breach which had existed ever since the fall of Pitt's earlier administration.

Addington had refused to take office in the existing government, but the lapse of a few months had proved that there was no real difference of policy between the Prime Minister and himself. Accordingly, Hawkesbury employed his good offices, and he was aided by the fact that two members of the ministry were desirous of quitting it, namely the Duke of Portland and Lord Harrowby, the latter in consequence of a serious accident: this created vacancies which could be offered to the ex-Premier. Before Christmas, 1804, Pitt and Addington met at Hawkesbury's house, and after a long conference the chief points at issue were amicably settled.

No one was more desirous of a reconciliation between the Prime Minister and his predecessor than was the King. Hawkesbury kept him fully informed of what was taking place, and hardly had Pitt and Addington met than the Home Secretary received the following letter from the Sovereign:

Windsor Castle,  
*December 24th, 1804.*

The King has the greatest satisfaction in expressing to the Lord Hawkesbury his thorough approbation of the judiciousness and fairness of his conduct in the arduous task of bringing Messrs. Pitt and Addington together, who both are certainly attached to his Majesty, and that will be the real bond of their union, and will rekindle in their breasts the friendship which has from a very early age consolidated them, and which false friends and backbiters had for a time apparently destroyed, but there is good reason to believe had not in reality affected.

The King is most desirous to know how the meeting ended yesterday, and whether Lord Hawkesbury augurs well from this first interview.

George R.

Hawkesbury duly supplied the required information, which evoked a further letter from his anxious master:

Windsor Castle,  
*December 25th, 1804.*

Lord Hawkesbury is too well acquainted with the King's sentiments not to feel the gratification that has arisen in his Majesty's mind on the account of the two meetings<sup>1</sup> of Messrs. Pitt and Addington having proved perfectly satisfactory. This gives the more pleasure as attachment to the King and country are the real ground on which these interviews have been founded.

<sup>1</sup> They had a second meeting at Addington's house on the day after the first.



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The King will, with great pleasure, see Lord Hawkesbury, who has been the happy instrument of effecting the reconciliation of two men who ought ever to have been friends, and may now easily remain so, either of the days he has proposed. To secure, if anything is wanting, the continuation of the cordial intercourse now effected, his Majesty has prepared letters for each of the parties, going no further than his thanks to both for having reunited for the good of his service. And, indeed, that is one of the greatest cases to his mind that, in a political view, could have been effected. These Lord Hawkesbury, after perusing, is to transmit to each of them.

George R.

The adhesion, temporary as it was soon to prove to be, of Addington and his friends to the ministry, was not effected without some difficulty, since the partizans on both sides argued that, according to their particular prejudices, the concessions made were too great or too trifling. In these circumstances Pitt's comment to Wilberforce was very apposite: "I think they are a little hard upon us in finding fault with our making it up again, when we had been friends from our childhood, and our fathers were so before us."<sup>1</sup> Eventually, an arrangement was arrived at by which Addington was raised to the peerage as Viscount Sidmouth,<sup>2</sup> and succeeded the Duke of Portland as Lord President of the Council; Lord Mulgrave was transferred to Lord Harrowby's office; and Addington's friend, Lord Buckinghamshire, who, as Lord Hobart, had been Secretary for the Colonies in the former administration, became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

If the year 1804 thus closed happily for the government, its successor opened very inauspiciously indeed, for at this moment, when Napoleon was at Boulogne and the fate of the world was hanging in the balance, there was a political crisis which surely reflected little credit upon the Opposition, and which did much to shorten the Prime Minister's life. Melville, now First Lord of the Admiralty, was charged on the report of a commission with having misapplied public money as Treasurer of the Navy in Pitt's former administration. What had happened was that he had been negligent in the extreme in that he had not prevented the Paymaster from engaging in private speculation with the naval balances. He had not himself touched a penny,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of William Wilberforce*, vol. III, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> Why he was not given the customary earldom is not clear.

but as Head of the Department affected he was responsible. Pitt was determined to do what he could for an old friend and colleague, and he secured the support of the Cabinet for a motion to appoint a Select Committee of the House to make further investigations.

The debate began on April 8th, 1805, and lasted well on into the morning of the following day. Pitt, Canning, and Castlereagh defended Melville against the attacks of the Opposition, and at 4 a.m. Wilberforce rose. The Prime Minister leant eagerly forward to hear what his oldest friend would have to say, but when the reformer advocated a prosecution he sank back on the Treasury Bench in obvious misery. The division showed an equality of votes; and there was a dramatic silence while the Speaker, white as a sheet, made up his mind how he should give his casting vote. Finally, he voted against the government,<sup>1</sup> and there then ensued a scene which testified at once to the enthusiasm and the bad manners of the Whigs. One member gave the "view-hallo," and many crowded to the exit to see "how Billy Pitt looked after it." A few of the Prime Minister's supporters formed a phalanx round him, and he was helped out of the House in a state bordering on collapse.

In due course, it may be added, Melville was impeached, but was acquitted on every count. When the news of Trafalgar arrived Pitt wrote to him in his retirement that his energy at the Admiralty had largely contributed to the victory. Meanwhile there was his office of First Lord to be filled, and at first the Prime Minister thought of transferring Hawkesbury from the Home Office. "He was not," as he wrote to his father, "at all desirous of the change. It would bring with it considerable anxieties, and cost him some sacrifices; but, at the same time, he was of opinion that, if it was urged upon him, he could not, under all the present circumstances, creditably decline it. It was certainly the office, next to that of Prime Minister, of the most importance, and of the greatest power and responsibility, and it was of the utmost consequence that it should be filled by some person who enjoyed a due portion of public esteem and confidence, and who would be able to keep down that party

<sup>1</sup> Presumably so that the question could remain open.

spirit which had of late been spreading itself very widely in the profession of the Navy." Apparently Hawkesbury would have had to give up the leadership of the House of Lords if his successor at the Home Office had been a peer, and it seems to have been this consideration which induced Pitt to abandon his original intention and to appoint Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, who was raised to the peerage as Lord Barham.

Sidmouth took this appointment as a personal affront. His hope had been that Lord Buckinghamshire should go to the Admiralty, in which case he would press the claims of his brother or brother-in-law to the Chancellorship of the Duchy. In pique both Sidmouth and Buckinghamshire resigned, but once again Hawkesbury acted as mediator, and the resignations were withdrawn. The crisis was, however, only averted, and when Sidmouth's supporters pressed for a criminal prosecution against Melville the Prime Minister decided that he would let his two disloyal and factious colleagues go, so that in June Canning was able to write to Frere:

The Doctor is out again,  
So things may come about again.

While party passions and personal considerations were dominating the scene at Westminster the French Emperor was putting the final touches to his project. The destruction of his enemy's commerce now assumed almost as prominent a place as the invasion of Britain. He decided to concentrate in the West Indies the fleets of Brest, Ferrol, Toulon, and Cadiz, which were to convey some 4,700 troops for action against the British colonies: they were then to return with a united force of more than forty sail to the English Channel for the great stroke on which hung the destinies of the world. Pitt, however, had not been inactive, and before these plans could mature Napoleon had been called away from the Channel to battle in Bohemia. Contrary to popular belief, therefore, Trafalgar was fought, not to save Britain from invasion, but to assure her position in the Mediterranean. Hawkesbury's letter to his father on hearing of Nelson's victory is not without interest:

Whitehall,  
November 6th, 1805.

Dear Father,

I enclose the Gazette of Lord Nelson's victory. There is perhaps no example of so glorious and decisive a victory. The French fought uncommonly well, and Villeneuve is, I understand, in astonishment at the result. Poor Nelson's death is worthy of his life. He lived long enough to know the event of the action. It is a singular circumstance that this victory took place on the very day of the capitulation of Ulm,<sup>1</sup> and almost at the very time that Buonaparte was declaring that ships, colonies, and commerce were all that he wanted. I have written to the King to propose a general thanksgiving.

Nothing is yet finally determined about the honours and provision for Nelson's family; but I believe it will be decided to make his heir an earl, to double the present pension, and to settle it upon the title *for ever*. Collingwood will be created a peer. I trust this event will have its effect upon the Powers of the Continent, and will prove to them how much their honour and safety depends on their own exertions. We have nothing new from thence, and have now been in utter darkness (except what we hear from France and Holland) for a fortnight.

Your affectionate Son,

Hawkesbury.

During these months, which were to prove the last of his life, Pitt showed himself to be in very truth the son of Chatham, and from his activity at this time can be estimated the loss which his country sustained by his untimely death. Twelve months before Trafalgar was fought he was hard at work forming yet another coalition against France, but he had learnt by bitter experience that in persuading potential allies deeds speak louder than words, so he determined to strike a blow which should impress the world with Britain's determination and might. Spain had been warned that if she continued to violate her neutrality by giving underhand assistance to Napoleon the consequences would be unpleasant, and when she showed no signs of mending her ways three Spanish treasure-ships were seized on the high seas without a previous declaration of war. It was the very blow which Chatham had wished to deliver over forty years before, but which his colleagues in the Cabinet had vetoed, and which had thus brought about his resignation.

<sup>1</sup> This is a mistake; *vide infra*, p. 99.

The stroke was certainly a violation of international law, but Napoleon had created so many precedents in that connection that there could be little cause for complaint save on grounds of abstract morality, which tend to be ignored in time of war.

While Hawkesbury was still at the Foreign Office in the previous administration, Gustavus IV of Sweden had suggested another coalition, this time between Austria, Britain, Russia, and Sweden, to withstand French aggression, and in due course the Tsar and the Emperor signified their adherence. The object of this alliance was defined to be the expulsion of French troops from North Germany, the assured independence of Holland and Switzerland, and the restoration of the King of Sardinia to his Continental possessions. Russia and such other Powers as might join were to provide 500,000 men, while Great Britain, instead of furnishing troops, was to supply £1,250,000 a year for every 100,000 men engaged in the campaign. After the war there was to be a conference to define more clearly the law of nations and to establish a European federation, where the states were to be independent, enjoying constitutions "founded on the sacred rights of humanity." In other words, there was to be a system of collective security, based on the aggrandizement of Austria and Sardinia in northern Italy to check the ambition of France. Pitt was dead long before there was an opportunity to put these plans into execution, but they foreshadow what Hawkesbury's administration was one day to effect at Chaumont and Vienna.

Napoleon did not allow the initiative to pass out of his hands. The Austrians had not believed that he would be able to reach the Danube before the second week of November; but already, on August 29th—nearly two months before the battle of Trafalgar—the "Army of England" had become the "Grand Army," and on September 2nd it began its march towards the Rhine in almost full strength. Its commander was probably by no means sorry for the excuse to abandon the projected invasion and to silence his critics by success in fields to which he was more accustomed. Criticism had, indeed, been growing as the following song, popular among the troops encamped on the coast, clearly proves:

FIRST YEARS IN THE CABINET

CHANSON DE L'ARMÉE FRANÇAISE EN HOLLANDE

AOÛT, 1805

*Sur l'air, "Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre"*

Marmont<sup>1</sup> s'en va-t-en guerre,  
Miroton, ton, ton, Mirontaine.  
Marmont s'en va-t-en guerre;  
Dieu sait s'il reviendra  
De ce pays là-bas  
Qu'on veut subjuguier  
Pour Monsieur Buonaparte.  
Ce n'est pas notre affaire.  
Miroton, etc.

Ce n'est pas notre affaire  
Que d'aller naviguer  
Pour un gueux d'étranger  
Qui n'est Roi de la France.  
Miroton, etc.

Qui n'est Roi de la France  
Que pour le désoler,  
Pour nous faire enterrer.  
Que le diable l'emporte  
En Corse où il est né  
D'un greffier ruiné.  
Ce n'était pas la peine  
De l'avoir couronné  
Contre notre bon gré.  
Morbleu, mes camarades  
Revenons au passé  
Où, Louis Bienaimé  
Nous menait à la gloire  
Sans nous faire noyer.

With such sentiments prevalent among the troops it behoved Napoleon to be off. His luck did not desert him, and on October 20th the Austrian vanguard capitulated at Ulm. Everything now depended on Prussia.

The long line of the French communications stretched across Germany, while in front of Napoleon lay the bulk of the Austrian, and the whole of the Russian, army still unbeaten. Had Prussia taken advantage of her opportunity, the overthrow

<sup>1</sup> A divisional commander. Later Duke of Ragusa and Marshal of France. Represented Charles X at St. Petersburg, 1826-1828.

of the French Emperor would almost certainly have been anticipated by nine years, to the incalculable benefit of Europe, which would thus have been spared the loss of blood and treasure that took place between 1805 and 1814. Talleyrand's diplomacy, however, kept Berlin neutral by dangling Hanover under the nose of Frederick William III, and on the snow-covered hillside of Austerlitz on December 2nd, 1805, the coalition collapsed before the French charge. Napoleon's domination of the Continent was more firmly established than ever.

When the news of Austerlitz reached England the Prime Minister was already a stricken man. He was only forty-six, but the previous twelve months had subjected him to a strain which his health could not stand. An obstinate monarch, a Royal Family continually at loggerheads, a weak and divided Cabinet, and an uncertain majority in the House of Commons, were too much for him. Success in his projects for the overthrow of Napoleon alone could have restored him, and in place of success there was Austerlitz. "Oh, doctor," said his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, in later years, "what a life was his! Roused from sleep (for he was a good sleeper) with a despatch from Lord Melville; then down to Windsor; then, if he had half an hour to spare, trying to swallow something; Mr. Adams with a paper, Mr. Long with another; then Mr. Rose; then, with a little bottle of cordial confection in his pocket, off to the House until three or four in the morning; then home to a hot supper for two or three hours more, to talk over what was to be done the next day:—and wine, and wine. Scarcely up next morning, when 'tat-tat-tat,' twenty or thirty people one after another, and the horses walking before the door from two till sunset, waiting for him. It was enough to kill a man—it was murder." In the circumstances it was small wonder that there were no septuagenarian or octogenarian Prime Ministers in those days, or that Hawkesbury and Canning were both in their graves before they were sixty.

The old enemy, gout, had returned soon after his attendance at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, and on November 27th we find Canning, whom Pitt was about to promote to Cabinet rank, pressing him not to delay his projected visit to Bath until it

was too late to do him any good, for he was already so shaky that he could hardly raise a glass to his lips. Finally, he went to Bath on December 7th, and both Hawkesbury and Canning were with him there.

The last weeks of Pitt's life have been the sport of legend to an extent unknown in the case of any other modern British statesman. The most famous, immortalized by Thomas Hardy in *The Dynasts*, represents the weak and emaciated Prime Minister at Shockerwick House, near Bath, receiving the news of Austerlitz, and, after locating the village on a map of Europe, bidding his host, "Roll up that map; it will not be wanted these ten years." According to another story these words were uttered to Lady Hester Stanhope as the dying Prime Minister entered his house at Putney. There is, however, nothing in the correspondence of either Hawkesbury or Canning to corroborate these dramatic stories, while, unfortunately for romance, the news of Austerlitz filtered through by degrees, and at first the battle was believed to have resulted in the defeat of the French. Moreover, there is no sort of evidence that Pitt realized how ill he was, and Hawkesbury wrote that he had been "laid up with a fit of the gout, but it was now going off, and he hoped to be able to drink the waters for a week before he returned to London." Furthermore, when he left Bath he took with him from a circulating library there Schiller's *History of the Thirty Years War*, which is hardly the type of book likely to be chosen by one who knew that his end was only a matter of days.

The evidence is conflicting as to the way in which he stood the journey home; he went to Bowling Green House, on Putney Heath, which he had leased some eighteen months before. The doctors who visited him there on his return saw no cause for alarm, and on January 12th he wrote to the Marquess Wellesley, "I am recovering rather slowly from a series of stomach complaints, followed by severe attacks of gout, but I believe I am now in the way of real amendment." Yet the torture which he was suffering was as much mental as physical, and there can be little doubt that the arrival of good news from the theatre of war would even at this late hour have cheated death of its victim. Instead there came Castlereagh and Mulgrave to tell him of the vacillation of Prussia, and to ask his authority



## LORD LIVERPOOL

for the withdrawal of the British troops which had been sent to northern Europe on the assumption that Frederick William would join the coalition. This proved to be more than he could bear, and death must have seemed preferable to inevitable defeat at the hands of a joyful Opposition.

On the 14th he saw Lord Wellesley, who testified that his brain was as clear as ever, and Pitt said to him of his brother, the subsequent victor of Waterloo, "He states every difficulty before he undertakes any service, but none after he has undertaken it." Pitt fainted after this interview, and although he rallied for a time, there never was any real hope again. He died three hours before dawn on January 23rd, 1806, the twenty-fifth anniversary of his entry into Parliament. "He killed himself by persistent overwork on behalf of a nation which did not understand him, and in the service of a monarch who refused to allow him to strengthen his administration."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rose, J. H., *The Life of William Pitt*, vol. II, p. 531.

## CHAPTER IV

### OPPOSITION, AND THE PENINSULAR WAR, 1806-1812

As Home Secretary it fell to Hawkesbury's lot to notify the King of Pitt's death, and he duly reported his interview with the Sovereign in the following letter:

St. James's Square,  
*Thursday.*

Dear Father,

I am just come home for dinner, not having been five minutes alone the whole of the day, and being under the necessity of attending a Cabinet this evening. I have had a very long and distressing conversation with the King. He was much better, however, at the end of it than he was at the beginning. He has returned to Windsor to-night, and promised to remain there quiet till he hears from us, which will probably be on Saturday morning. He has desired that we would, each of us (after the subject has been thoroughly discussed), send him an opinion in writing of what is best to be done. I do not believe there will be any material difference of opinion, so far as I can judge at present. . . .

Your affectionate Son,

Hawkesbury.

On Saturday morning the King returned to London, and Hawkesbury had a second, and still longer, conference with him. In the meantime the ministers had come, both collectively and individually, to the conclusion that they could not remain in office: the administration had been making very heavy weather even under the leadership of Pitt, and without him they felt that it could not hope to survive, more particularly in view of recent French successes on the Continent. This view Hawkesbury now represented to George, who found it most unpalatable, since it meant the return of Fox to office; and he pressed the Home Secretary to form a government himself. It

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was an attractive offer for a man of thirty-five, but Hawkesbury possessed the supreme political virtue of being able to wait, and he accordingly declined. The King reluctantly accepted this decision, but as a proof of his personal esteem he conferred upon Hawkesbury the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports which had previously been held by Pitt.<sup>1</sup>

George was thus compelled to have recourse to the Opposition, which was extremely distasteful to him. He determined, however, to quote Hawkesbury, "to swallow a bitter pill," but "to do it in the most dignified manner, and to put the whole on grounds which, if they should fail, would secure the good opinion and support of the whole country." After what had happened two years before he felt that he could not, without loss of dignity, send directly for Fox; so he asked Grenville to form an administration, and gave an undertaking that he would raise no objection to the inclusion of Fox in it. The two men soon produced their list of ministers, and by the end of the first week of February the so-called ministry of "All the Talents" was installed in office. The Cabinet was composed as follows:

First Lord of the Treasury	Lord Grenville
Secretary of State (Home)	Earl Spencer
Secretary of State (Foreign)	C. J. Fox
	Viscount Howick (Sept.)
Secretary of State (War and Colonies)	W. Windham
Lord President of the Council	Earl Fitzwilliam
	Viscount Sidmouth (Oct.)
Lord Chancellor	Lord Erskine
Lord Privy Seal	Viscount Sidmouth
	Lord Holland (Oct.)
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Lord H. Petty
First Lord of the Admiralty	Viscount Howick
	T. Grenville (Sept.)
Master-General of the Ordnance	Earl of Moira
Chief Justice, King's Bench	Lord Ellenborough

<sup>1</sup> On his death, Hawkesbury was succeeded by Wellington.

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Other ministers were:

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland	Duke of Bedford
President of the Board of Control	Thomas Grenville
	George Tierney (Sept. 1806)
Treasurer of the Navy	R. B. Sheridan
Secretary at War	General Fitzpatrick
Chancellor of Ireland	George Ponsonby

The new administration was, in fact, a coalition, as the names of the ministers clearly prove. One section of it consisted of those who had served under Pitt, and who might be classed as dissident Tories, while the large proportion of ministers were pure Whigs, who had always been opposed to the late Premier. From the beginning the government was none too popular in the country. The English electorate, as Disraeli was later to observe, has never been enamoured of coalitions, so that the union of Grenville with Fox, to whom until recently he had been most violently opposed, and of both with Sidmouth whom they had bitterly attacked, recalled that combination of Fox with North which had incurably damaged the former's political reputation twenty years earlier. Moreover, it soon became clear that Fox himself was failing, and that his constitution had broken up, although he was only fifty-seven. Before he had been two months in office it occasionally became necessary to postpone portions of ministerial business because of his inability to take part in it, and for the last five weeks of the session he was forced to discontinue his attendance at the House of Commons altogether.

Hawkesbury was now in Opposition for the first—and last—time in his life, and he was its leader in the House of Lords. The policy of his colleagues and himself was to give the government a fair trial so that if it should fail its incompetence should be manifest to the country, and they themselves could not be accused of factious criticism. The administration had, however, hardly been formed before Hawkesbury was compelled to adopt a highly critical attitude towards it as a result of the inclusion in the Cabinet of the Chief Justice of the King's Bench.

In retrospect this appointment has found few to defend it, for it was a direct menace at once to the independence of the

judicial bench and to the collective responsibility of the Cabinet. It was undesirable that the same man should hear, as a judge, a prosecution which as a minister he might have advised, and it was even more undesirable that the other members of the Cabinet should be held responsible for any miscarriage of justice in the King's Bench. "Fox, however, could not understand what the outcry was about: he airily remarked that he had never had an easier case to defend than this: he denied the collective responsibility of the Cabinet altogether, and ridiculed the separation of the judicial from the legislative functions. By this pronouncement he added the coping-stone to his edifice of imaginary constitutional theory. He had in turn mistaken the functions of the Crown, the Lords, and the Commons: now he mistook the functions of the judiciary. It was solely a matter of convenience. He wanted the Chief Justice in the Cabinet: the justification he invented in his usual way."<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of March the matter was raised in the House of Lords by Hawkesbury's brother-in-law, the Earl of Bristol, who moved a resolution affirming the impropriety of "summoning any of the judges of the courts of common law" to the councils of State. Hawkesbury could hardly remain silent when an issue of this magnitude was raised, and in a closely reasoned speech he "had no hesitation in affirming that the present appointment of a common law judge to a seat in the Cabinet was not congenial with the pure principles and practice of the Constitution. He should regret to see that respect which was due to the sacred character of a judge diminished by his becoming mixed up, as a party to them, with the struggles of politics; and whatever might be the decision of the House, he affirmed it to be beyond all question that such was the general feeling of the country." Bristol did not press his resolution to a division, but it is not without interest to note that at a later date Ellenborough himself admitted the justice of the arguments that had been brought forward against his appointment, and greatly regretted that he had been induced to lend himself to such a measure.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hobhouse, C., *Fox*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Campbell, Lord, *Lives of the Chief Justices*, vol. III, p. 188.

Once more in office, Fox soon discovered that the real Napoleon was a very different person from what he had imagined, but before he had time to act on this knowledge, he died, in September. Grenville thereupon offered the Foreign Office to Canning almost on his own terms, but the latter replied that he had not that "inconsiderate precipitancy of ambition" which could lead him for the sake of office to coalesce with a party with which he had hardly an opinion in common, and to join a ministry of which he doubted the stability.<sup>1</sup> On Canning's refusal the Foreign Office and the leadership of the House of Commons were given to Lord Howick, who was succeeded at the Admiralty by the Prime Minister's brother.

The death of Fox left an enfeebled ministry to meet a very serious crisis, because by the autumn of 1806 the turn of Prussia had come. Her neutrality had served Napoleon's purpose in the preceding year, and now she could be crushed with impunity. At Jena and Auerstadt the system of the great Frederick collapsed like a house of cards, and before long Berlin was in French hands. Wordsworth well reflected the ordinary Englishman's attitude towards these events when he sang:

Another year! Another deadly blow!  
 Another mighty Empire overthrown!  
 And we are left, or shall be left, alone;  
 The last that dare to struggle with the Foe.  
 'Tis well! From this day forward we shall know  
 That in ourselves our safety must be sought;  
 That by our own right hands it must be wrought;  
 That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.  
 O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!  
 We shall exult, if they who rule the land  
 Be men who hold its many blessings dear,  
 Wise, upright, valiant; not a servile band,  
 Who are to judge of danger which they fear,  
 And honour which they do not understand.

Meanwhile the ministry of "All the Talents" was proving itself a very "servile band," for it refused to support a vote of thanks to the Volunteers for their services when invasion threatened, and all their pay and allowances were abolished;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stapleton, A. G., *George Canning and His Times*, p. 97.

the Additional Force Bill was repealed; and the ballot for the Militia was suspended. Finally, Grenville and his colleagues replied to the battle of Jena by holding a General Election in the hope of thereby weakening the Opposition in the House of Commons.

Hawkesbury seems to have taken stronger objection to this manœuvre than did his colleagues, and he went so far as to write directly to the King on the matter:

Sire,

The confidence with which your Majesty has been so graciously pleased to honour me makes me feel it an indispensable duty to obtrude on your Majesty's time for a very few moments for the purpose of bringing under your Majesty's consideration several circumstances which may eventually become of great public importance, and with which I am confident your Majesty would desire to be acquainted.

Since the change which took place in your Majesty's councils in the beginning of February last, an alteration has been produced in the relative state of parties much more rapid and extensive than could have been expected in so short a space of time. Your Majesty's present ministers have disappointed the expectations of many persons who were, in the first instance, disposed to place confidence in them: their strength in Parliament has evidently diminished; has proved much less than could have been imagined; and they have been progressively losing ground in the opinion of the country.

On the other hand, the party which constituted your Majesty's last administration have become more united among themselves, and have confessedly acquired a great increase of strength and influence in Parliament and in the country, and more particularly in the House of Commons, where they were supposed, both by themselves and their opponents, to be most weak some months ago. The result appears to be, upon the most accurate investigation, that independent of that strength which belongs to government as such, and which may be considered as transferable from one administration to another, the number of persons attached to your Majesty's present servants in the House of Commons very little exceed the number of those who are attached to their opponents. The state of the county representation in Great Britain will furnish a reasonably fair test of the truth of this observation. The number of county members of Great Britain favorably disposed to the present administration are forty-nine; those favorably disposed to their opponents are forty-five; there are eight undecided, but more inclined to the latter than to the former; and seventeen altogether doubtful.

Under these circumstances I cannot avoid most anxiously requesting your Majesty's attention to the effect of a dissolution of Parliament at the present time. Such a measure would have the inevitable effect of throwing

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the whole influence of government in the borough elections into the hands of the present administration. It would secure to them the strength they would thereby acquire for the whole of the new Parliament. It would determine in their favour the opinions of many persons who are undecided at present, and, in the event of your Majesty's feeling it expedient to change your administration, it would deprive their successors of the advantage of that measure which would be essential to the establishment of their power.

This measure, if it should be proposed, cannot fairly be pressed upon your Majesty on any public grounds. The present Parliament was chosen in the month of June 1802. Three years of its legal existence, then, are unexpired, and no pretence for a dissolution can be advanced either on the ground of any obstruction having been given in the House of Commons to the necessary business of government, or on account of any material differences of opinion between the two Houses of Parliament. I feel the less difficulty in submitting these observations for your Majesty's consideration in consequence of knowing that, whatever shades of differences of opinion may exist on other points, there is an unusual agreement upon this subject amongst all those who are not connected with the present administration whose opinion it has been judged practicable or prudent to ascertain.

There are several points connected with the subject of this letter which I could explain more fully to your Majesty in conversation; but, until I receive your Majesty's commands to attend you, I feel the impropriety there would be in my obtruding myself into your presence at this time.

I have the honour, etc., etc.,

Hawkesbury.

In spite of this appeal the King did not feel that he could refuse the dissolution for which his ministers were asking, and on October 24th, 1806, Parliament was accordingly dissolved. If, however, George did not refuse his assent to an election taking place, he did withhold the donation of £12,000 with which he was in the habit of assisting his ministers on such occasions. The result of the polling was to give Grenville a considerable majority, and the new Parliament met on December 15th. Hawkesbury at once stated his objections to the dissolution, and censured the government for having advised an unusual exercise of the royal prerogative "with levity and without due necessity." He admitted, indeed, what could not be denied, that to dissolve Parliament at his pleasure "was a prerogative which was inherent in the King in its strongest sense. If it were possible that Parliament could acquire legal permanence, for ever so short a time, independent of the Crown, there would be no security for the monarchy." He



went on, however, to say that no prerogative could be exercised in an unusual manner without "the ministers who advised such an act incurring the weightiest responsibility." In adopting this line of argument Hawkesbury was on shaky constitutional ground, and he was wise in not basing any definite motion upon his remarks; as he must have realized in the following year when events compelled an administration of which he was one of the leading members to ask the King for another dissolution.

Meanwhile, after the death of Fox and the failure to come to terms with Napoleon, the ministry of "All the Talents" found itself compelled to revert to the policy of Pitt, which it pursued in a feeble and halting manner. Two expeditions were sent to the Near East in the hope of coercing the Sultan into a rupture with France, and both failed dismally. Admiral Duckworth succeeded in getting his fleet through the Dardanelles, but he failed to persuade the Turks to do what was required of them, and he only managed to re-pass the Narrows after considerable loss. A force that was sent to Egypt surprised Alexandria, but was repulsed before Rosetta; and the only result of these attempts to gain cheap laurels in the Near East was to throw the Porte into the arms of Napoleon. In the Americas an incompetent general was ordered to take Buenos Aires, which he not only failed to do, but also lost Monte Video, which had been conquered earlier in the year, and British prestige was hardly repaired by the court-martial that dismissed him from the service. The solitary success that the Grenville administration could claim to its credit was a victory at Maida, in Calabria, which demonstrated the superiority of the British line over the French column. After this battle, however, the victor, Sir James Craig, prudently withdrew his troops from the mainland to Messina, and thus began that occupation of Sicily which was destined to last for eight years, and to prove a firm barrier to Napoleon's eastern ambitions.

Nevertheless, it was not these failures that brought Grenville's administration down, but, as so often in the case of British governments, a side-wind which was, in effect, a repetition of the crisis of 1801. The Duke of Bedford, who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had urged upon his colleagues the

importance of making some concessions to Roman Catholics. The Irish Act of 1793 had allowed them to hold commissions in the army up to the rank of Colonel, and the government now proceeded to obtain the reluctant consent of the King to the extension of this concession to Catholics throughout his dominions. At this point some misunderstanding seems to have arisen between George and his ministers, for Howick moved for leave to bring in a bill opening all commissions in both Services to Catholics. As soon as the King heard of this he refused his sanction, and the government was compelled to withdraw the measure. Sidmouth was in disagreement with his colleagues on this issue, and not only resigned but also urged the Sovereign to make a stand upon his prerogative. George was only too ready to take this advice, and he accordingly required from his ministers a written pledge that they would never press upon him further concessions, direct or indirect, to Roman Catholics. This pledge they very properly refused to give, and the government then resigned.

Perhaps the most apposite comment was that of Sheridan,<sup>1</sup> who said that he had often heard of men running their heads against a wall, but he had never before heard of men building a wall expressly for that purpose. Once more, and for the last time before madness finally claimed him, George had shown himself a better judge of public opinion than his ministers. As has been seen, he refused to take the action suggested by Hawkesbury, for he considered it premature to bring the government down at that time; he preferred to give his ministers enough rope to hang themselves, a fact which they duly accomplished. When the country was in due course asked for its verdict, this was overwhelmingly in favour of the King.

The first step which George now took towards the formation of a new administration was to send for Hawkesbury and Eldon, who found him, so Hawkesbury told his father, "never better in health or more composed in manner." The King's original intention had been to ask Hawkesbury himself to form a government, but the Opposition leaders had already decided that their purpose would best be served by having a mere

<sup>1</sup> He was Treasurer of the Navy, the post which Canning had held in Pitt's last administration.

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figure-head as Prime Minister, and their choice had fallen upon the Duke of Portland, who had filled the position for a few months in 1783. A figure-head he certainly was, for during the two and a half years that he was Premier he never opened his mouth in the House of Lords, and there is no definite evidence that he even appeared there.

The new Cabinet was constituted as follows:

First Lord of the Treasury	Duke of Portland
Secretary of State (Home)	Lord Hawkesbury
Secretary of State (Foreign)	George Canning
Secretary of State (War and Colonies)	Viscount Castlereagh
Lord President of the Council	Earl Camden
Lord Chancellor	Lord Eldon
Lord Privy Seal	Earl of Westmorland
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Spencer Perceval
First Lord of the Admiralty	Lord Mulgrave
Master-General of the Ordnance	Earl of Chatham
President of the Board of Trade	Earl Bathurst
	Earl of Harrowby (1809)

Other ministers were:

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland	Duke of Richmond
Chief Secretary for Ireland	Sir Arthur Wellesley
Lord Chancellor of Ireland	Lord Manners
Secretary at War	Sir J. Pulteney <sup>1</sup>
President of the Board of Control	Robert Dundas
Treasurer of the Navy	George Rose
Attorney-General	Sir Vicary Gibbs
Solicitor-General	Sir Thomas Plumer

In spite of the fact that the new Prime Minister was a peer, Hawkesbury assumed the leadership of the House of Lords. "Thus was inaugurated the great Tory ministry, which, with scarcely any changes but those occasioned by death or the growing infirmities of one or two members, governed England for above twenty years with unbroken success and unequalled

<sup>1</sup> In 1809 he was succeeded by Lord G. Leveson-Gower, who was given a seat in the Cabinet.

glory. From the very first it bore in a high degree the stamp of Lord Hawkesbury's own character; reflecting it, of course, to a greater extent when, at the end of five years, he became its acknowledged chief."<sup>1</sup>

Parliament met on April 8th, 1807, and there were at once debates in both Houses as to the circumstances in which the previous administration had left office, but the new government obtained a vote of confidence by a majority of 81 in the Lords and of 46 in the Commons. Hawkesbury wrote to his father:

Nothing could go off better than our debate in the House of Lords; and the division exceeded my expectations. The House of Lords was never on any former occasion so full: the largest number that ever divided before, including proxies, was 229, and the number last night was 261; as I hear, within 15 of the whole number that had taken their seats. The debate was, in fact, very good. Lord Aberdeen<sup>2</sup> spoke for the first time, and did well. Lord Harrowby made the best speech I ever heard from him. It produced a considerable effect on the House, and evidently galled Lord Grenville particularly. I never heard from Fox, in the times of his greatest violence, so factious and mischievous a speech as Grenville's. I do not, however, dread any bad effects from it even in Ireland, as I know, from experience, that sort of speech defeats its own object. There will be another debate in the House of Commons to-morrow, but after the great majority in our House, and the decision of the City, it is not to be apprehended that the minority will increase in numbers.

One of the first acts of the new government was to dissolve Parliament, the very course for which, while in Opposition, the ministers had censured their predecessors in the previous year. The new Parliament met on June 22nd, 1807, and the first divisions in the House of Commons gave the government majorities in the neighbourhood of two hundred. In supporting the address Hawkesbury indulged in a certain amount of special pleading, for he said that "while he objected to the dissolution of Parliament in 1806, he must contend that the late dissolution stood on very different grounds. Paramount considerations, involving the preservation of the Constitution of the country, led to it; and if ever the public opinion was

<sup>1</sup> Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. I, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister, 1852-1855.

clearly pronounced upon any question, it was upon the propriety of his Majesty's late proceedings." What, in effect, had happened was that the King had dismissed his ministers because he did not approve of their policy, and that the country at the polls had approved of his action.

It was well that a strong administration should be in office, for abroad the situation was going from bad to worse. In the early months of 1807 there were still considerable bodies of Prussian troops in the field in spite of the disasters which had overtaken them; in February the Russians had checked the French at Eylau; and the Swedish armaments were as yet untouched. Unfortunately, however, Grenville's government had allowed the precious weeks to slip past, and by the time the new ministry took office it was too late to retrieve the position. Canning and Castlereagh at once assembled such troops as they could collect, but only to find that their predecessors in office had dispersed the transports that Pitt had always kept ready for such an emergency. Eventually, a force was sent to the island of Rügen, which belonged to Sweden, but the time had passed when it could usefully have co-operated with the northern allies, for Dantzic had already surrendered to the French in May, this bringing to an end the resistance of Prussia, and on June 14th Napoleon overthrew the Russians at Friedland.

The summer of 1807 thus saw the French Emperor at the height of his power, for hardly had Friedland been fought than the Tsar proceeded to come to terms with his enemy at the expense of his friends. Russian diplomacy has always enjoyed an unenviable reputation for duplicity, but it has rarely betrayed such complete perfidy as during the ten days which elapsed between the battle of Friedland and the meeting of Napoleon and Alexander at Tilsit. There is, however, just this to be said in favour of the Tsar and his counsellors: the Russian armies had been beaten in the field; Prussia was at her last gasp; Gustavus IV of Sweden was proving himself impossible both as an ally and as a monarch; and, most important of all, the British government had done nothing to assist in the struggle against the common enemy. These were certainly reasons for peace, but not for a peace which had as its basis an

alliance with France directed against Russia's former friends. When, in due course, Hawkesbury was head of a government which had extensive dealings with Alexander I, it is not surprising that he should have remembered this earlier experience of Russian policy.

The two Emperors had their first meeting on June 25th, and on the 7th of the following month the Treaty of Tilsit was signed. The public clauses provided for the reduction of Prussia to the rank of a second-class Power, but the secret ones affected Great Britain far more closely. By these Alexander and Napoleon agreed that if the British government did not mitigate the severity of the Orders in Council, which had forbidden trade with France and her allies, and restore all maritime conquests made since 1805, they would summon Portugal, Denmark, and Sweden to close their ports against British shipping, while any of the three Powers which refused to comply with the order was to be treated as an enemy.

Great Britain was thus in the gravest danger, for she was threatened both on her own shores and in her commerce. When Napoleon marched away from the Channel in the summer of 1805 it was clear that the invasion of England would not become a practicable proposition again until Europe was at his feet: that condition was fulfilled at Tilsit. It was true that France had lost the bulk of her fleet at Trafalgar two years before, but if she could obtain possession of the navies of Portugal, Denmark, and Sweden she could more than repair her losses, and thus be in a position once again to form plans for the invasion of the British Isles.<sup>1</sup>

The advantage of having a man at the Foreign Office of the calibre of Canning was now apparent, for hardly had the Franco-Russian agreement been concluded before he knew of it, including the secret provisions regarding Great Britain. The source of this information is one of the mysteries of diplomacy, and for many years credence was given to the story that when Napoleon and Alexander met on the raft in the Niemen there was an agent of the Foreign Office behind a curtain listening to their conversation. Unfortunately for those who would like to believe this romantic legend, the accounts of the expenditure

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rose, J. H., *Napoleonic Studies*, pp. 133-65.

of Secret Service money for the year in question give it no support, and the probability is that Canning received the news from some official of the Tsar's household, where Anglophil sympathies were strong and the most important secrets were rarely kept. Furthermore, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg was Granville Leveson-Gower, an Oxford contemporary and friend of Hawkesbury and Canning, who had already given warning that a French attack on Denmark was by no means impossible: by June 26th he had sent off news of the Franco-Russian *rapprochement*, and this reached the Foreign Office on July 16th. In any event it is clear that what arrived in London was merely a report of the preliminary conversation between the two Emperors on June 25th, and not a copy of the secret clauses of the actual treaty, for Canning believed that every moment was of the most vital importance if the Franco-Russian plans were to be forestalled, whereas had he been acquainted with the terms of the treaty itself he would have realized that he had until December to take the necessary precautions.

In the light of the knowledge available the danger seemed to the British government to be imminent, and of the three directions from which it threatened, the Danish was the most menacing, for Sweden was still at war with France, while before Napoleon could lay hands on the Portuguese fleet he would have to come to terms with Spain. Under the influence of Canning, fully supported by Castlereagh and Mulgrave, the Cabinet acted with rare promptitude.

Before the end of July a naval squadron under Admiral Gambier, and a military force commanded by Sir Arthur Wellesley, had left for Copenhagen, and with them went Jackson, who had been British minister in Berlin since serving under Cornwallis in France. His instructions were to negotiate an offensive and defensive alliance with the Danish Crown Prince, afterwards Frederick VI, who was at that time regent for his father, the mad King Christian VII. Jackson was far from being an outstanding success as a diplomat, but on this occasion he was given very little latitude. He had to insist, as a preliminary to the conclusion of the alliance, upon the surrender of the Danish fleet, which the British government pledged itself to

return intact at the end of the war. In any event the negotiation would have been a difficult one, for Great Britain had been unpopular in Denmark ever since the attack on Copenhagen six years before, but Jackson did not improve matters by very obviously offering the alliance at the cannon's mouth. The Crown Prince refused to negotiate, and Jackson called on Gambier and Wellesley to enforce the British terms. Wellesley defeated the Danes at Roskilde, and Copenhagen was bombarded by land and sea. On September 8th, 1807, the Crown Prince made an unconditional surrender, and the Danish fleet was incorporated in Gambier's squadron. The British land and sea forces then proceeded to Sweden, where they received a warm welcome from Great Britain's last remaining ally on the mainland of Europe.

Hawkesbury was not, as Home Secretary, directly concerned with the brilliant diplomacy which thwarted the designs of the two Emperors at Tilsit, but as leader of the House of Lords it fell to his lot to defend there what had been done against the attacks of the Opposition. In the Commons the administration had a galaxy of talent, led by the Foreign Secretary himself, at its disposal, and after an acrimonious debate it had no real difficulty, in spite of a spirited assault by Sheridan and Ponsonby, in obtaining a majority of 253 votes to 108.

In the Upper House the situation was slightly different, for Hawkesbury had little first-class support upon which he could rely, and Grenville, Holland, and Grey<sup>1</sup> were formidable adversaries. Parliament met on January 31st, 1808,<sup>2</sup> and during the course of the following month the Whig attack was pressed home in a number of motions reflecting upon the morality of the attack on Copenhagen. The attitude of the Opposition was reflected in the well-known verses of Thomas Moore:

If Grotius be thy guide, shut, shut, the book,  
In force alone for law of nations look.  
While Cobbett's pirate code alone appears  
Sound moral sense to England and Algiers.

In reply, Hawkesbury's defence was undoubtedly weakened by his inability, for obvious reasons, to cite the information

<sup>1</sup> As Lord Howick had become in November 1807.

<sup>2</sup> There was no autumn session in 1807.



which the ministry had received concerning the Tilsit negotiations, but in the most vital division there was a government majority of fifty-seven.

Meanwhile, there were the Swedish and Portuguese fleets to be considered, and, inspired by Canning, the government showed the same promptitude where they were concerned that had been displayed in the case of the Danish navy. In respect of Sweden, it soon became obvious that Gustavus IV was impossible. Sir John Moore was, indeed, sent with a force to co-operate with the Swedes, but he was then withdrawn, and in any case the Swedish fleet was too small to affect the balance of naval power in Europe. With Portugal the case was very different, for not only was she Britain's oldest ally, but events were moving so fast that the slightest delay was fraught with the gravest danger. That country, too, was governed by a Prince Regent, afterwards John VI, on behalf of the mad Queen Maria I, and Canning lost no time in coming to terms with him. The Prince Regent agreed to surrender the Portuguese fleet, and to retire to Brazil, but he was dilatory in carrying out his promises. In the meantime Napoleon had not been idle. In October he concluded the Treaty of Fontainebleau with Spain, by which he secured permission to march French troops across Spanish territory in return for a promise to partition Portugal, and he then sent Junot to occupy Lisbon. It was not until the French were in the very suburbs of the Portuguese capital that the Prince Regent handed his ships over to the British and set sail for Rio de Janeiro. Canning had won the race with Napoleon by a very short head indeed, but he had won; and the Portuguese fleet, like the Danish, was under the White Ensign, not the tricolour. He also signed a Convention with Portugal authorizing a temporary British occupation of Madeira.

The year 1807 had thus closed more favourably from the British point of view than had seemed possible only a few months before, and henceforth the invasion of the British Isles was out of the question. The ambitious schemes concocted by the French and Russian Emperors at Tilsit had come crashing down like a house of cards. The Danish and Portuguese fleets were in British, not French, harbours, and the Corsican's

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triumphal entry into London was as far off as ever. It is true that, owing to the intractability of the Swedish King, the Tsar was in a fair way to obtain possession of Finland, but that mattered not at all to the British government. On the other hand, Britain had neither an ally nor a soldier, save at Gibraltar, on the mainland of Europe. Napoleon was the undisputed master of the Continent.

It was thus clear that if the war was not to end in a stalemate both sides must adopt new tactics, and this they proceeded to do. Britain intensified her blockade of the countries under the control of France, and Napoleon retaliated by endeavouring to strike at the most vulnerable part of his adversary, namely her commerce. "The battle between the sea and the land was to be fought out on commerce. . . . The Imperial soldiers were turned into coastguardsmen to shut out Great Britain from her markets; the British ships became revenue cutters to prohibit the trade of France. The neutral carrier, pocketing his pride, offered his services to either for pay, and the other then regarded him as taking part in hostilities."<sup>1</sup>

In such a war Napoleon clearly enjoyed many advantages. He controlled nearly the whole coast from Hamburg to Leghorn; the rulers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia were at his bidding; and the Spaniards, Dutch, West Germans, and Italians were his vassals. In these circumstances the French Emperor may well have felt justified when, at Berlin in November 1806, he had decreed that the British Isles were henceforth in a state of blockade and isolation; had forbidden on the part of all his dependent countries any commerce with them; and had declared every subject of King George III found in a country occupied by French troops to be a prisoner of war.

The British government retaliated by a series of Orders in Council which were issued at intervals throughout the year 1807. Of these regulations Canning was the author, and he defended them as a "justifiable measure of retaliation on France." By the first of these Orders vessels were forbidden to trade between any ports in the possession of France, or of her allies if under her control. By the second, issued after the

<sup>1</sup> Mahan, A. T., *Influence of Sea-Power on the French Revolution and Empire*, vol. II, p. 289.

extension of Napoleon's Continental System to the Mediterranean, general reprisals were granted against the goods, ships, and inhabitants of Tuscany, Naples, Dalmatia, and the Ionian Islands. By the third, all ports from which the British flag was excluded were declared in blockade, all trade in their produce unlawful, and their ships a prize, while all vessels carrying certificates of origin, a measure upon which Napoleon had insisted to prevent evasion of his system, were declared liable to capture. By the fourth, the sale of ships by a belligerent to a neutral was pronounced illegal, because the French had managed to preserve much of their commerce by fictitious sales of their merchantmen, which enabled them to trade under neutral flags.

Napoleon heard of the last of these Orders in Council when he was in Italy in November 1807, and in reply he issued the Milan Decrees. In these he declared every neutral ship which submitted to the Orders to be denationalized and good prize of war; and the same judgment was passed upon every vessel *sailing to or from any part of the United Kingdom or its colonies or possessions*. In short, each combatant had now instituted a total blockade of the other, and it remained to be seen which was in the better position to effect its purpose.

The countries under the domination of France were not long in feeling the consequences of this extension of the war into the economic sphere. They were cut off from all those tropical products which the progress of civilization had rendered necessary for the modern world, especially sugar and coffee, together with most of the silk, cotton, and dyes needed for textile manufacture. Not unnaturally, the ports of Germany and the Netherlands were considerable sufferers from the blockade, and it had not long taken effect before a citizen of Hamburg was writing, "There is no longer any trade as it existed formerly . . . more than 300 vessels are laid up."<sup>1</sup> In consequence there was growing discontent with French rule, and a considerable increase in smuggling; this was repressed by Napoleon with increasing severity, and he soon became the more unpopular as a result. In France itself the general run of prices was higher by one-third than it had been before the Revolution. As

<sup>1</sup> Perthes, F., *Memoirs*, vol. I, pp. 148, 162.

for Great Britain, what principally enabled her to defeat Napoleon's attempt at strangulation was the wealth of the West Indies; though the French Emperor's decrees were by no means without effect, for a widespread depression began to make itself felt in consequence of the closing of the Continental market for manufactured articles. The glamour of Wellington's victories in the Peninsula cannot disguise the fact that there was very real distress in many quarters at home while they were being won.

One unfortunate result of the Orders in Council was a progressive deterioration in British relations with the United States. The two grievances which were specially resented by the Americans were the constant search of their ships for deserters, and the refusal of the British authorities to recognize their custom-house arrangements. As the law then stood a British subject could not get rid of his nationality, but the United States was full of English and Irish emigrants, as well as of deserters from British ships, and these facts caused many complications. American warships were continually being stopped and searched, and more often than not some of the crew were detained. The most notable case was that of the *Chesapeake* in February 1807, which was forcibly boarded by the *Leopard*, and from which three citizens of the United States were removed. On this the President, Thomas Jefferson, assuredly no friend of Britain, issued a proclamation commanding all British ships to quit American harbours immediately, and to abstain from entering them in future.

Hawkesbury's views and those of his colleagues on this action were set out by him in a letter:

The American government, in consequence of the action between the *Leopard* and the *Chesapeake*, have issued a proclamation prohibiting the armed vessels of this country from entering their ports or harbours. We have as yet received no official communication on the subject, except a note from Mr. Munro,<sup>1</sup> the American minister here, written, as he avows, without any authority from his government, but only in consequence of the notoriety of the transaction. The civilians are of opinion that Admiral Berkeley was not justified in his orders, which authorised the *searching a man-of-war for deserters*; but that, on the other hand, if there really were deserters from our

<sup>1</sup> James Monroe, later fifth President of the United States.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

ships in the American service, the American government was bound, on representation, to *discharge them*.

We are not sufficiently acquainted with all the circumstances of the case to be able to decide on the exact application of these principles to the case itself: but it will be thought right to send a respectable naval force to America, with a minister authorised to enter into explanations on the subject, provided the American government revoke their prohibitions; but, in the event of their refusal, with full power to commence hostilities. There appears to exist no doubt that the exclusion of the ships of war of one belligerent from these ports whilst those of the other are admitted is a violation of neutrality to which the country cannot submit.

How this business will end it is impossible to say. An American war, in addition to all our other difficulties, would certainly be an evil at the present moment; but experience has proved that we shall not avoid it by unbecoming concessions, and the losses, if it shall occur, will fall more heavily upon the Americans than upon the people of this country.

The purely economic issue was equally complicated. It was a breach of international law for neutrals to trade between the colony of a belligerent and the mother country, but they might do so, for their own supply, with the colony. Furthermore, if they imported from the colony or colonies more than they wanted, they might re-export it even to the mother country, and the proof of a *bona fide* interrupted voyage was the payment of the custom-house dues in the ports of the neutral. In the United States, however, these dues were not paid in money, but in bonds, which were cancelled when the goods were re-exported. The payment was thus fictitious, and the British officials refused to recognize the arrangement. In 1807 Jefferson secured the passage through Congress of an Act of Non-Inter-course, of which the object was to induce Great Britain and France to modify their policy towards American trade. Nominally the measure applied equally to both belligerents, but in practice it only affected Great Britain, for France was debarred from direct trade with the United States by the British command of the sea.

With a certain amount of goodwill on both sides a settlement might have been possible, but there was no goodwill on either side. At no stage of his career could Canning have been described as an admirer of the United States, its institutions, or its policy, and a few years later his description of the American navy as "half-a-dozen fir frigates, with bits of bunting flying at

their heads,"<sup>1</sup> excited great indignation on the other side of the Atlantic. In any event he was handicapped by not being able to find the right man for the legation at Washington. David Erskine had recently been recalled for having exceeded his instructions, and the man who was now sent out, namely Jackson of Copenhagen fame, in the circumstances set forth in Hawkesbury's letter, was not likely to allay the irritation of the Americans, who, on their side, were equally unconciliatory.

War was clearly very near, and it was largely averted by the fact that Jefferson was succeeded at the White House by the more pacific James Madison, but the causes of friction still remained. Great Britain refused to withdraw the Orders in Council, and the American President was compelled by public opinion in his country to retain the Act of Non-Intercourse; the result was the cessation of all traffic between the two countries, and a growing bitterness which, in 1812, resulted in war.

This dispute with the United States did not concern Hawkesbury as Home Secretary, though it was later to affect him very closely as Prime Minister, but as leader of the House of Lords he had to defend the policy which the government had adopted. What did very definitely come within his department, and was a source of great embarrassment to him, were the renewed quarrels between the Prince and Princess of Wales.

At the end of the year 1805 Sir John and Lady Douglas, a somewhat vulgar knight and his wife, who had been close friends of the Princess, made a statement to the Duke of Sussex which contained a number of scurrilous assertions against her, among others one to the effect that she had given birth to an illegitimate child. The Duke told his brother, who persuaded the King to report the matter to his ministers. By this time the administration of "All the Talents" was in office, and Grenville, Spencer, Ellenborough, and Erskine were appointed to investigate the charges. This was known as the Delicate Investigation. The commission was soon able to issue a report which acquitted the Princess of everything except extreme indiscretion, but when she not unnaturally demanded that her formal acquittal should be ratified by the King admitting her to Court,

<sup>1</sup> Timbs, J., *Anecdote Lives of the Later Wits and Humorists*, vol. I, p. 33.

she was put off with a variety of excuses. Caroline, however, was being advised by Perceval, and she threatened to publish the whole story of her disagreements with her husband: on this, the Cabinet agreed to her demand, but no steps had been taken to carry out this promise when the Whig government fell.

To Hawkesbury, as Home Secretary, fell the disagreeable task of securing the fulfilment of the preceding administration's promise, for the reception of the Princess at Court was by no means acceptable to the King, who had by now lost his earlier sympathy for his daughter-in-law. But Hawkesbury was insistent, and so "at a party given in honour of the King's birthday in June of that year, 1807, the Prince and Princess of Wales met and stood, for a moment, face to face. He, coldly disdainful, she, with a smile awry and a shrug of those still impertinent shoulders, exchanged a few words unheard by any. Then she curtsied; he bowed; and as she rose from her bow he turned and passed on, never to speak with her again."<sup>1</sup> Rooms in St. James's Palace were refused to the Princess, and Kensington was indicated as a more suitable abode. In this state the matter rested for some years until Hawkesbury was compelled to concern himself with it again.<sup>2</sup>

It was, however, not only in the affairs of the British Royal Family that the Home Secretary became implicated at this time, for those of the French Royal House were also to be his concern. The Comte d'Artois had been in England for some time, but one of the consequences of the Treaty of Tilsit was that his brother, the Comte de Provence, now *de jure* Louis XVIII of France and Navarre, who had been living at Mittau, had to set out on his travels again; after a short stay in Sweden, he landed at Yarmouth at the end of October 1807 under the name of the Comte de L'Isle. This unexpected arrival raised a number of complications, though on the whole it was to be welcomed. The French Empire might or might not be permanent, but there were definite advantages in having the alternative master of France a guest on British soil.

Hawkesbury and Canning would have preferred Louis to take up his residence in Scotland, and George offered him

<sup>1</sup> Leslie, Doris, *The Great Corinthian*, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fulford, Roger, *George the Fourth*, pp. 87-8.

Holyrood House for that purpose, but the offer was declined, though the French King, in a letter to Hawkesbury, emphasized the fact that he had come to England as a private individual. After having expressed a wish to be much nearer London than Edinburgh, he continued, "Je ne puis terminer cette note sans détruire par des faits la supposition accréditée, que j'avais prétendu réclamer le titre et les honneurs de la royauté. Mes instructions à mon frère et au Comte de la Châtre; la lettre du Comte d'Avaray à M. d'Adlerberg, en date du 16 Octobre; la mienne au Roi, en date de Yarmouth . . . enfin mon refus du salut de la frégate suédoise en quittant son bord, prouvent suffisamment que, dans ma volonté même, c'est le Comte de L'Isle, et non le Roi Très-Chrétien, qui est venu descendre en Angleterre."

This was all very well, but Hawkesbury's memory went back fifteen years to the dissensions of the French *émigrés* at Coblenz, and the inconveniences which would arise from allowing them to make London the centre of their activities were very obvious to him. As he wrote to his father:

We shall still have, I fear, a great deal of trouble with the French King and his attendants. They are at present at Gosfield. The Comte d'Avaray, who is the reputed minister, applied yesterday to be allowed to come to town; but leave was refused to him. I conclude Monsieur will return in a few days, and we shall then know with more certainty on what we have to rely. I have no doubt of his anxiety to get his brother out of the country, as far as he can manifest it without indecency. The brothers have always had two distinct parties; besides, Monsieur would not like to be eclipsed by the presence of his elder brother.

The final solution was that Louis took up his residence at Hartwell, near Aylesbury, and there he remained until in due course he was called to the throne of France. In the meantime he was in receipt of a pension from the British government of £6,000 a year, and in this connection it is not uninteresting to note that between 1794 and 1808 no less a sum than two and three-quarter million pounds was voted by Parliament for the relief of the French Royalists.

The early months of the year 1808 saw the beginning of what can only be described as the next round in the contest between Napoleon and Great Britain, and although this was



not yet Hawkesbury's immediate concern it was in due course to become his preoccupation. The plans made at Tilsit had miscarried, and the attempt to put a stop to British commerce with the mainland of Europe was proving none too successful, so the French Emperor, fertile as ever in alternative schemes, decided to attack his rival in another quarter. If he could gain possession of Spain, and, better still, of Spanish America, he would not only be able to deal a severe blow at British commerce in the Atlantic but would also be in a position to threaten the route to the East, which then went round the Cape of Good Hope. To carry out such a project he was admirably placed, for he was provided with excellent opportunities for interfering in Spanish domestic affairs, thanks partly to the Treaty of Fontainebleau, but chiefly to the extraordinary situation which obtained at Madrid.

The third generation of the House of Bourbon in the Peninsula had succeeded in making the proud Spanish monarchy ridiculous, a feat which the Habsburgs had never accomplished even in their decline. The reigning monarch, Charles IV, was as uxorious as had been his grandfather, Philip V, and he was completely governed by his wife, who, in her turn, was wholly in the hands of her lover, Godoy, who had recently been created Principe de la Paz. The Prince of Asturias, later Ferdinand VII, was in violent revolt against the degradation of his parents, but his own reputation for honesty was none too good, and on more than one occasion he showed himself an arrant coward. It was not an attractive family, and it is faithfully depicted by the brush of Goya. In these circumstances the waters were admirably suited to Napoleon's fishing, and the Treaty of Fontainebleau had, from a military point of view, left Spain at the mercy of the French, for Junot's army was already in possession of Portugal.

This was the moment chosen by the Prince of Asturias to take part in a plot against Godoy, and for his share in the conspiracy he was put in prison. Ferdinand thereupon appealed for help to Napoleon, and the King also asked the French Emperor to arbitrate upon his differences with his son. This situation suited Napoleon admirably, so he took advantage of it to reinforce his troops in the Peninsula, and a force under

Murat approached Madrid. Thereafter events moved rapidly. The rumour spread that Charles IV was about to leave the country as the Prince Regent had left Portugal, and before long an insurrection broke out in the capital: Godoy was maltreated, and the King abdicated in favour of the Prince of Asturias. Napoleon thereupon refused to accept this abdication, and summoned both father and son to Bayonne. When the Spanish Royal Family was assembled in that town, both Charles and Ferdinand were forced to resign their rights to the throne, and Napoleon presented the Spaniards with a new sovereign in the person of his own brother, Joseph, who had been concerned in the negotiations which led to the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens. Since then he had been King of Naples, and he was soon to be nicknamed *Pepe Botellas* by his new subjects from his alleged partiality for the bottle.

The consequences of this act were alike dramatic and unexpected, for they were nothing less than the uprising of the Spanish people against the invader, and for Napoleon it was the writing on the wall. On May 2nd, 1808, the population of Madrid rose, and there took place in the Puerta del Sol a sanguinary struggle which was to begin a new era in history. The insurrection in the capital was soon put down, though not without considerable bloodshed; in the field the Spaniards were no match for the victors of Austerlitz, and a victory of Marshal Bessières at Medina del Rio Seco at the beginning of July enabled Joseph to enter the capital before the end of that month. Punitive columns were then sent out in various directions to secure submission to the new monarch, and it was the disaster which overtook one of these that may be said to mark the first step in the downfall of Napoleon. At Bailen, in Andalusia, General Dupont was compelled to lay down his arms with 20,000 men. The news of this surrender, even in those days of imperfect communications, was not long in reaching all parts of Europe, and it encouraged every enemy of Napoleon and of France. All over Spain men sprang to arms, and the first thought of the Spanish patriots had been to turn to Great Britain for help. So began the Peninsular War, for the conduct of which Hawkesbury was soon to be responsible.

For the time being, however, it was his colleagues, Canning

and Castlereagh, who occupied the centre of the stage. Events of the first importance followed one another in quick succession. By the Convention of Cintra, which came on the heels of Wellesley's victory at Vimeiro, the French evacuated Portugal; at Erfurt the Tsar and Napoleon renewed their alliance, and sent a joint note to Great Britain summoning her to make peace; Sir John Moore was killed in the hour of victory at Corunna; and the ill-fated expedition to Walcheren was launched. These years marked the apogee of Napoleon, but already the shrewdest brain in Europe, Talleyrand, had come to the conclusion that the tide was on the turn, and was making his preparations accordingly.

Hawkesbury, as leader of the House of Lords, was naturally often called upon to defend the government's policy, but in his own department it was with the affairs of Ireland that he was principally concerned. At that time the executive government in Dublin was conducted by the Lord Lieutenant subject to any instructions he might receive from the Home Office in London, and the office of Chief Secretary was not so important as it had been in the past and was again to be in the future. When Ireland had her own Parliament, and still more when she had an independent Parliament from 1782 to 1800, the Chief Secretary was to the Lord Lieutenant what a Secretary of State is to the Crown, that is to say the exponent of the pleasure of the supreme executive. After the Act of Union, when the Lord Lieutenant governed Ireland subject to instructions from home, his Chief Secretary, sitting in the House of Commons, did no more than explain small matters of local government. So when Sir Arthur Wellesley went to take command in Portugal in 1808 he did not give up the post of Chief Secretary, but he employed Mr. Croker to explain to the House such Irish business as might arise during his absence.

Such was the theory of Irish government, the practice was very different. The Lord Lieutenant was so frequently changed that he never had time to get to know the country properly, and he was in consequence dependent upon the information which he received from his Irish advisers, all of whom were biased against the vast mass of the Irish people and many of whom were members of the Orange Institution. The outlook

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of the Orangemen was admirably summed up by Thomas Moore in the lines:

That forming one-seventh, within a few fractions,  
Of Ireland's seven millions of hot heads and hearts,  
We hold it the basest of all base transactions  
To keep us from murdering the other six parts.

The Orange toast fully expressed this point of view: "To the Glorious, Pious and Immortal memory of the great and good King William, who freed us from Pope and Popery, Knavery and Slavery, Brass Money and Wooden Shoes, and he who refuses this toast may he be damned, crammed and rammed down the Great Gun of Athlone."

Ireland was, in effect, ruled in the name of England by a minority of her own people, and the results, during the period under review, were to be summed up by Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons in 1829:

Let us cast a rapid glance over the recent history of Ireland, trace it from the Union, the period when the retirement of Mr. Pitt from the King's councils brought more prominently forward the differences of public men in regard to the Catholic Question. What is the melancholy fact? That for scarcely one year, during the period that has elapsed since the Union, has Ireland been governed by the ordinary course of law. In 1800, we find the Habeas Corpus Act suspended, and the Act for the Suppression of Rebellion in force. In 1801, they were continued. In 1802, I believe, they expired. In 1803, the insurrection for which Emmet suffered broke out: Lord Kilwarden was murdered by a savage mob, and both Acts of Parliament were renewed. In 1804, they were continued. In 1806, the West and South of Ireland were in a state of insubordination, which was with difficulty repressed by the severest enforcement of the ordinary law. In 1807, in consequence chiefly of the disorders that had prevailed in 1806, the act called the Insurrection Act was introduced. It gave power to the Lord Lieutenant to place any district by proclamation out of the pale of the ordinary law, it suspended trial by jury—and made it a transportable offence to be out of doors from sunset to sunrise. In 1807, this Act continued in force, and in 1808, 1809, and to the close of the session of 1810.

In effect, Hawkesbury viewed Irish affairs through the eyes of the oligarchs of Dublin Castle, and he never visited Ireland to find out the truth for himself. It is easy to blame him for this, but it must be remembered in his defence that Britain was fighting for her life against Napoleon, and that to him, as to the vast majority of his English contemporaries, Irish problems

were a side-issue. He believed that if the plans arranged at Tilsit had not been thwarted a French expedition would have landed in Ireland, and that it would have received the warmest of welcomes there. The Orangemen made a great parade of their loyalty to the throne; he took them at their word, and left the real government of the country in their hands. This was both a crime and a blunder, but it would be difficult to name any English statesman of the time, with the exception of Canning and Sheridan—and they both had an Irish background—who would have acted otherwise.

While Hawkesbury had been immersed in public business, his father had died on December 17th, 1808, and in consequence the Home Secretary was now the second Earl of Liverpool. He was not, however, destined to be Home Secretary much longer, for the Portland administration was in process of dissolution, though for a time the fact was concealed from all save the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

The root of the trouble lay in the animosity between Canning and Castlereagh, and it is more than likely that in origin this animosity was as much personal as political. Castlereagh's rise had been rapid, and his colleague ascribed this not to merit but to family influence. The Secretary of State for War was already regarded everywhere as sound and trustworthy, and although the part which he had played in bringing about the Union was rightly remembered against him in Ireland, it was held to his credit in England. On the other hand, in marked contrast with Canning, he was a very poor speaker. "At his best he was sensible and pedestrian; at his worst he was dull, rambling, and even ridiculous. . . . It was sometimes Castlereagh's fate in later years, when he particularly wished to impress the House of Commons, to draw from it titters of merriment." On one occasion he implored honourable members "not to turn their backs on themselves," while on another he referred to "the Herculean labour of the honourable member, who will find himself quite disappointed when he has at last brought forth his Hercules."<sup>1</sup> At this stage of his career Castlereagh's greatness lay in front of him, and Canning regarded

<sup>1</sup> Lockhart, J. G., *The Peacemakers, 1814-1815*, p. 237.

him as a stupid fellow who owed his advancement to his birth rather than to his abilities.

The first serious rift between the two men seems to have taken place over Moore's appointment to command in the Peninsula. Castlereagh had not been very enthusiastic about this, for although Moore was, with the exception of Wellesley, the best general the country possessed, he was an innate pessimist, and this was hardly a qualification for the part which had been assigned to him. When Moore took leave of Castlereagh, almost his last words were, "Remember, my Lord, I protest against the expedition, and foretell its failure." On this statement being quoted in the Cabinet, Canning exclaimed to Castlereagh, "Good God; and do you really mean to say that you allowed a man entertaining such feelings with regard to the expedition to go out and command it?"<sup>1</sup>

The unfortunate result of Moore's campaign precipitated a crisis, for by the spring of 1809 the Foreign Secretary's very limited stock of patience was at an end, and on March 24th he wrote to the Prime Minister tendering his resignation: he could work with Castlereagh no longer. Portland showed the letter to the King, and they both agreed that as it was out of the question to allow Canning to resign, Castlereagh should himself be transferred to some other office. To this Canning assented, and also to the suggestion that nothing should be said about the matter for the moment in view of the international situation, since Austria had again taken up arms against France. Castlereagh, however, was not informed of what was intended, for Earl Camden, who had originally been deputed to approach him, had also been asked by the Prime Minister to postpone the disclosure, though this fact was unknown to Canning. Why Portland could not have spoken to Castlereagh himself is by no means clear, and as Head of the Government it was certainly his duty to have done so, but he seems to have shrunk from what was undoubtedly an invidious task, and his timidity was soon to have very serious consequences.

The failure of the Walcheren expedition caused the final breach between Canning and Castlereagh. The Foreign Secre-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stapleton, A. G., *George Canning and His Times*, p. 160.

tary, more than ever convinced of his colleague's inadequacy at the War Office, now demanded that the promise made to him in the spring should be fulfilled. The Prime Minister once again hesitated to commit himself, but on September 6th he told Canning not only that his health necessitated his own resignation, but also that nothing had been said to Castlereagh of the proposed change in his position. On learning this, Canning at once resigned, and so did Portland, who really was far from well.

It was at this point that Castlereagh became acquainted with the negotiations that were afoot, and of which he had previously been in complete ignorance. He now heard that Canning, so long ago as the previous March, had been complaining of him to the Prime Minister, and he was not unnaturally indignant at what he considered to be an unworthy intrigue against him by a colleague behind his back. Castlereagh thereupon sent a strongly worded letter of protest to Canning, finishing with the sentence, "I must require that satisfaction from you to which I feel myself entitled to lay claim." The letter covered three sheets of folio, and when, on opening it, Canning caught sight of the last few lines, he is said to have exclaimed, "I had rather fight than read it, by God!"

The duel took place near the Telegraph at Putney Heath, within sight of the house where Pitt died—surely a melancholy reflection for both parties—at six o'clock on September 21st, 1809. Castlereagh had Lord Yarmouth<sup>1</sup> as his second, and Canning was attended by Charles Ellis.<sup>2</sup> After taking their ground they fired by signal, but missed. After the first fire the seconds endeavoured to compose the matter, though without success, and they then declared that after a second shot, whatever might be the result, they would not be parties to any further proceedings. At the second fire Canning was slightly wounded in the thigh, and the duel came to an end.

Liverpool's views on the situation are contained in a letter which he wrote to Thomas Wallace<sup>3</sup> two days after these events:

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards sixth Marquess of Hertford. He was the original of the Marquess of Steyne of *Vanity Fair* and of the Marquess of Monmouth of *Caningsby*.

<sup>2</sup> Later Lord Seaford.

<sup>3</sup> Later Master of the Mint.

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*Private and Confidential.*

Coombe Wood,  
September 23rd, 1809.

My dear Wallace,

As you must be desirous of knowing generally the circumstances which have led to the present extraordinary state of the King's Government, I have thought the following account of them would not be unacceptable to you. The particulars must be deferred till you come to town.

The story respecting Lord Castlereagh is too long to render it possible for me to trouble you with it at length at the present moment. His removal from the situation of the Secretary of State had been determined some time before either Perceval, myself, or the majority of the King's servants knew of the occurrences which had led to it. The expedition to the Scheldt had been decided before we even heard of it; and the question at that time was, whether the communication should be made to Lord Castlereagh immediately after the sailing of the expedition, or whether it should be deferred till its conclusion, and till the result of it was known in this country. A variety of considerations induced us to think (perhaps erroneously) that this was the most improper time for making any new arrangements of the departments of Government; and we were led to hope that some events might occur in the course of the expedition which might obviate, in some degree, the difficulties which at that time presented themselves to our minds.

In this state matters remained till Sunday, the 10th inst., when the expedition being considered by Canning to be at an end, he called upon the Duke of Portland for the fulfilment of the promise which the duke had most unfairly extracted from the King (without the knowledge of the greater part of his colleagues, and particularly of those whom he was most bound to consult), at the time Lord Granville Leveson-Gower was admitted into the Cabinet.

The promise was, however, absolute, and, having been made in the King's name, must necessarily be fulfilled.

The state of the Duke of Portland's health had become more critical every day; and it occurred to me that the best means of obviating the various difficulties with which we were surrounded, was by persuading the Duke of Portland to retire, and by making, in consequence, an entirely new arrangement of the Administration.

It was obvious that no satisfactory arrangement could be made of the Government in the House of Commons if Perceval and Canning did not both form a part of it. Though there might be disadvantages in the first minister being in the House of Commons, Perceval was fully aware that Canning might make difficulties in acting under him in that capacity, and in a communication which passed between them he proposed that they should both keep their relative situations, and that some peer, whom the King would approve, should be agreed upon as First Lord of the Treasury. This communication led to an explanation from Canning that, in his



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opinion, the first minister must be in the House of Commons; that the choice in that House rested between Perceval and himself; that he could not expect that Perceval would agree to his holding the situation, and that he, on the other hand, could not agree to act under Perceval as first minister.

To this Perceval replied that their situations were very different. That since the commencement of the present Government he had been entrusted with the general direction of business in the House of Commons; that he could not consent to Canning being minister without giving up both the situation and office which he had hitherto held in the House of Commons; that in the other alternative Canning would remain in the same office, and that though his (Perceval's) power and authority in the House would be somewhat increased, Canning's would not therefore be diminished; that he was aware, however, of the difficulties which might be considered as fairly standing in the way of such an arrangement, and that it was his wish, therefore, that they should endeavour to agree upon a third person to whom these objections did not apply. This proposal was, however, rejected. Canning declared that, if the Duke of Portland resigned, he should resign likewise; that he was ready to undertake to be minister himself, but that he could not agree to any arrangements of the nature suggested.

Such is the state of this most extraordinary transaction.

I have stated little more than facts, and leave them to your own judgment. I should only add that the remaining members of the Cabinet, with the exception of Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, are determined to stand together, and by the King. Huskisson and Sturges Bourne follow Canning; Rose, Long, Wellesley, Pole and I believe I may say all the other members of the Government, appear disposed to take their part with the majority of the Cabinet. It would be vain, however, to think of forming a Government of our own exclusive strength without some attempt at union with the most respectable of those who have hitherto been opposed to us. In consequence of this opinion Perceval and myself received the King's commands, on Saturday, to communicate with Lord Grey and Lord Grenville for the purpose of forming an extended and combined Administration. Messengers have been sent with this communication, and I conclude Lord Grey and Lord Grenville will be in town by the end of the week. What will be the result of the negotiation it is impossible to say; but under all the present circumstances it is certainly deserving of a fair trial.

I shall be obliged to you if you will consider this letter as confidential. You shall hear from me again as soon as the result is known.

Believe me to be,

Most sincerely yours,

Liverpool.

The situation was further complicated by the duel between Canning and Castlereagh. The King was annoyed with both of

them, and in a letter to Liverpool he said it "had occasioned him not more serious concern than surprise, that two persons holding the situations of Secretaries of State, and still in possession of the seals of office, should have been guilty of so total a dereliction of duty as to violate the laws which they were bound to maintain by the authority vested in them." He soon, however, appears to have relented, for on October 13th Canning wrote to Huskisson: "Perhaps it may be not uninteresting to you to learn how the King and I parted on Wednesday. Nothing could be kinder than his manner to me. Instead of avoiding (as I imagined he would) the subject of the duel altogether, as one on which it was not proper for him to talk, or to seem informed, he began immediately to enter into all the particulars of that event. The situation of the wound (which he made me point out to him on his own royal thigh), the time when I received the challenge, when Charles Ellis heard of it, how I held my pistol, etc., etc., confessing all along great abhorrence of the custom of duelling, but admitting in the most unqualified manner that I had no option."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the royal curiosity got the better of the royal disapproval.

The first reflection which must inevitably occur is that the two antagonists were both Irishmen who preferred to fight first and enter into explanations afterwards. Moreover, it is difficult to estimate the effect that would have been produced upon contemporary public opinion by the refusal of either party to fight once the dispute had arisen. Nevertheless, on the major issue Castlereagh was surely in the right. There was, indeed, nothing improper in the earlier behaviour of Canning, or even of Portland, but once the King's consent to the proposed change had been obtained, the Prime Minister should have informed Castlereagh of the course he intended to adopt, even though the transfer of office was not to take place for some months. The real culprit was thus Portland, and his hesitation may well have been due to his growing infirmities, but some blame also belongs to Canning for not making sure that Castlereagh was told of what was intended. Unfortunately, at this period of their lives the two men were far from being on good terms, and, so long as Castlereagh was removed from the War Office, Canning

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MSS. 38737 f. 368.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

does not seem to have cared a jot what were his feelings in the matter. Indeed, the only really satisfactory aspect of the whole business is the fact that the duel left no lasting ill-feeling between the two statesmen, and was, in reality, the beginning of a reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the task of forming a new administration was not proving easy, and Liverpool was soon shown to have been too optimistic regarding the prospects of a coalition. It was only under considerable pressure that the King had been induced to consent to consultation with the leaders of the Opposition, and his acquiescence soon proved to have been in vain. Grey refused to come to London at all, and Grenville only came to refuse every proposal that was put before him. As for Canning, it was felt that the duel had ruined his immediate chance of the Premiership, and so the successor of Portland proved to be Spencer Perceval.<sup>2</sup>

The following formed his Cabinet:

First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and of the Duchy of Lancaster	Spencer Perceval
Secretary of State (Home)	R. Ryder
Secretary of State (Foreign)	Earl Bathurst
	Marquess Wellesley, succ. Dec. 1809
	Viscount Castlereagh, succ. March 1812
Secretary of State (War and Colonies)	Earl of Liverpool
Lord President of the Council	Earl Camden
	Viscount Sidmouth, succ. April 1812
Lord Chancellor	Lord Eldon
Lord Privy Seal	Earl of Westmorland

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Memoir preceding Therry's edition of Canning's speeches, vol. I, pp. 59-83.

<sup>2</sup> For Canning's views, cf. Bagot, J., *George Canning and His Friends*, vol. I, pp. 344-7; Perceval's side of the case may be found in Walpole, Sir Spencer, *The Life of the Right Hon. Spencer Perceval*, vol. I, p. 347 *et seq.*

# OPPOSITION, AND THE PENINSULAR WAR

First Lord of the Admiralty	Lord Mulgrave C. P. Yorke, succ. May 1810
Master-General of the Ordnance	Earl of Chatham Lord Mulgrave, succ. May 1810
President of the Board of Trade	Earl Bathurst

Other ministers were:

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland	Duke of Richmond
Chief Secretary for Ireland	W. W. Pole
Secretary at War	Viscount Palmerston

Perceval was not a great Prime Minister. Pitt had early singled him out for promotion, so his rise had been rapid, and he is the only Law Officer in English history to have become Premier. "He spoke," said a contemporary, "without the disagreeable cant of the Bar, was never tedious, was particularly distinct in matters of business, and explained his financial measures with clearness and ability. His style was singularly acute, bold, sarcastic, and personal." On the other hand, he incurred the dislike of Canning and the bitter hatred of Napier, who wrote of his death, "That horrible crime was politically no misfortune to England or the Peninsula."<sup>1</sup>

Liverpool at the War Office was quite definitely the right man in the right place. It has already been shown that since his youth he had possessed a knowledge of, and an interest in, military matters quite unusual in an English politician, while he saw the international situation both clearly and as a whole. From the beginning he worked very closely with Wellington, as Sir Arthur Wellesley had now become, and he fully realized the importance of keeping the army in the Peninsula in the highest state of efficiency and at the maximum strength. The campaign in Spain and Portugal was the running sore of the French Empire, and Liverpool was determined to exploit this advantage to the uttermost. One of his earliest letters, as Secretary of State for War, to Wellington shows how keen was his interest in the progress of events in the Peninsula, and also the terms upon which the two men stood with one another:

<sup>1</sup> *History of the War in the Peninsula*, vol. IV, p. 155.

LORD LIVERPOOL

*Private.*

Downing Street,  
*November 21st, 1809.*

Dear Lord Wellington,

I think it may be very material that we should endeavour to procure, if possible, some accurate information respecting the present state of the provinces of Catalonia, Aragon, and Valencia.

I have always thought it an unfortunate circumstance unavoidably attendant on the Spanish contest that the provinces best calculated, from the character and disposition of their inhabitants, to make a formidable resistance to the French, should be the most remote from all intercourse with the British Government. The Aragonese are, as we are informed, universally admitted to be the most warlike people in Spain, and the Catalonians and Valencians the most industrious and active.

The resistance which these provinces have made (though we are imperfectly informed of the particulars) appears to have been more spirited, determined, and systematic than that of any other part of Spain. And though their neighbourhood to the frontiers of France must have given their enemy great advantages over them, yet it does not appear that they ever have been completely subdued; and, as long as the spirit of resistance continues there, it will be very difficult for Buonaparte to make an adequate effort for the purpose of reducing under his authority the more southern provinces.

It must be obvious that you have it not in your power, even if it were otherwise desirable, to afford any direct military assistance to this part of Spain by means of the army under your command; and I am not prepared to say that, even under the circumstances of such a change in the Spanish Government as might afford the prospect of a more favourable issue to the contest, it would be advisable to employ a limited moveable corps on the coasts of Catalonia and Valencia.

But I think it may be useful to have at least the means of considering this question fairly and fully, and that at all events this advantage would arise from opening an intercourse with that part of Spain, that we should know how far we might really depend upon them, what they wanted, and whether we had the means of affording them any assistance which could be considered as important.

If you agree with me in this opinion, I think it may be very advisable that you should send some steady officer on whose judgment you can rely, to provide you with information respecting this part of Spain, and it may be more convenient, on many accounts, that this officer should go from the British army, and communicate with you as commander of his Majesty's forces in the Peninsula, than that he should be sent direct from this country.

The names of two officers have been suggested to me as properly qualified for such service, Colonel Rourke and Major Sturgeon of the Staff Corps. I know nothing of them personally. You are the best judge how far

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they are competent to the service, and, if so, whether they can be properly spared at this time from the army.

Having opened my mind to you upon this subject I leave it to you to take such measures upon it as you may judge most advisable. I am confident that you will see the importance, in the event of the war continuing in the Peninsula, of giving your most serious attention to the state of these provinces.

I ought to add, that any steps which you may think it expedient to adopt for this purpose should be communicated to Lord Wellesley, or whoever may be his Majesty's minister in Spain; and he should be informed that the object of sending an officer to those provinces is to obtain military information, and not to interfere in any concerns whatever of a political nature.

I am, etc., etc.,

Liverpool.

Liverpool was no believer in what a later generation would have described as "side-shows," that is to say minor campaigns calculated to divert men and supplies from the main theatre of war in the hope of winning cheap laurels elsewhere. In the summer of 1810 he made this very clear to Wellington in a letter in which he said that "when he accepted the seals of the War Department, he laid it down as a principle that, if the war was to be continued, we ought not to suffer any part of our efforts to be directed to other objects." So fixed, indeed, was he in his determination to concentrate all the military strength of the country in the Peninsula, that when Sir John Stuart informed him that, in compliance with Lord Collingwood's suggestions, he had detached a force to expel the French from the Ionian Islands, Liverpool at once informed him that although, "if the occupation by us of those islands would tend materially to the security of Sicily without the necessity of increasing our military force at that time in the Mediterranean, it might on that ground be deemed expedient," the same view would not be taken if it required the slightest addition to the number of troops under Sir John's command, which indeed it would probably rather "be necessary to reduce than to augment, to provide for the exigencies of the service in other quarters."

For two-and-a-half years Liverpool was at the War Office, and no commander-in-chief in the field ever received more loyal support from a Secretary of State at home than Wellington received from him. Such consistent support was by no means

## LORD LIVERPOOL

easy to give. As time passed, and a decision seemed as far away as ever, grumbling became widespread: Napoleon's sun was still high in the heavens, and there was much criticism of a policy which appeared to have no other end than to keep the British Army permanently and uselessly locked up in the Peninsula. Among his colleagues the only one upon whom Liverpool could rely was Wellington's own brother, Wellesley. Perceval was vacillating, and the other members of the Cabinet were only too liable to be swayed this way and that by the opinions they heard expressed in the lobbies, the clubs, and across the dinner table. The Whigs were definitely hostile, and through their leaders, Grenville and Grey, they were particularly formidable in the House in which Liverpool himself sat: nor was this all, for Canning and his friends were on occasion extremely critical.

Yet, in spite of all these discouraging factors, Liverpool remained as optimistic as he had been in the even darker days of the first successes of Revolutionary France, and on occasion he found himself under the necessity of endeavouring to communicate his optimism to Wellington himself. The obstinacy of the Spaniards, the disinclination of the Portuguese for military service, and the misconduct of his own troops, from time to time induced a state of despondency in the mind of the commander-in-chief, and provoked him into the statement that "he had long been of opinion that a British army could bear neither success nor failure, and that their present conduct proved the truth of this judgment." He was, too, disgusted with the increasing number of requests for leave on the part of his officers, and when, in addition to these and innumerable other annoyances, a momentary want of supplies of any kind pressed upon him, he was apt to give vent to his feelings in terms which did not represent his considered opinion. In some such circumstances Liverpool wrote him the following letter:

*Private.*

London,

*September 10th, 1810.*

My dear Lord Wellington,

I have received your letter, marked "private," of the 19th ult. I am at a loss to conceive upon what grounds you can have supposed that the King's

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ministers had no confidence in the measures adopted for the defence of Portugal. I should have thought that their language in Parliament must have had the effect of satisfying the world as to their public sentiments upon this subject. It certainly exposed them not only to the censure of the Opposition, but even to the animadversion of some of their friends, for what was represented to be their extreme sanguineness in the cause of the Peninsula. With respect to their *private* sentiments, I never knew a question on which there was less difference of opinion in Cabinet than upon the subject of Portugal; either as to the expediency of persevering in the defence of it, as long as could be consistent with the safety of the British army, or as to the belief that there existed a fair chance of success, provided the attack was deferred till after the British army was reinforced, and had recovered the effects of the sickness of the last campaign, and that time could be gained for the equipment and discipline of the Portuguese force.

It is certainly true that, in the House of Commons, the Portuguese subsidy was carried by a small and unwilling majority; and I believe that, if the House had been left to act upon their own feelings, they would in the month of February, when the subsidy was voted, have decided upon withdrawing the army from Portugal; but this is principally to be ascribed to the circumstance that all the officers in the army who were in England, whether they had served in Portugal or not, entertained and avowed the most desponding views as to the result of the war in that country. Not an officer, as far as I recollect, expressed, on the occasion, any confidence as to probable success; and not a mail arrived from Lisbon which did not bring letters at the time from officers of rank and situation in the army (many of which were communicated to me) avowing their opinions as to the probability, and even necessity, of a speedy evacuation of the country. It is true that some of the officers to whom I allude have since entirely changed their opinions, as I know from letters which I have recently received from them; and they may now, therefore, be very ready to shift their former opinions upon members of the Government; but the truth is, the contest never could have been maintained in Portugal through the winter and spring, if it had not been for the determination of Government to persevere in it, at all risks to themselves, against not only the declared opinions of their opponents, but the public remonstrances of many of their friends.

Upon another part of your letter I am anxious to make an observation. I can assure you that you are very much mistaken if you suppose that the defensive system of warfare, which you have felt it necessary and expedient to adopt during the present campaign, has lowered your reputation in this country. Upon this subject I can safely refer you to any friends or correspondents you may have in England, in whatever situation of life they may be, and I am sure you will find them all concur in stating that your military reputation never stood so high as it does at the present moment, and that even those whom you might suppose were least favorably inclined towards you are disposed now to do you the fullest justice.



## LORD LIVERPOOL

You will find in the enclosed paper the answers to all your propositions in the order in which you brought them forward; I trust that most of them will prove satisfactory to you.

When the reinforcements now destined for you shall have reached you, and the four regiments shall have arrived from Sicily, the British army in Portugal will have received an augmentation of nearly 14,000 rank and file; and, allowing for a waste during the campaign of 4,000 men, the augmentation at the end of it would still amount to 10,000 beyond the force originally destined for the defence of Portugal.

I should deceive you if I held out to you the expectation that either the military or financial resources of this country would enable the Government to keep up an army to this amount in Portugal for any considerable length of time, in addition to all the other necessary drains upon the service.

The recruiting does not, at this moment, cover in proportion the ordinary waste of an army at home, and, unless we receive larger supplies of money from South America than we have any reason to expect, Mr. Perceval is at a loss to know how we shall be able to find specie to meet such a great increase of expenditure.

The augmentation, therefore, of your force must be considered as made with reference to the present emergency; and if the contest is to be maintained in Portugal and in the Peninsula upon the principle originally adopted, of its being a *long* contest, the British army must be reduced as soon as the present exigency will admit of it.

We are very anxious, therefore, not with a view of abandoning, but for the purpose of maintaining the contest in the Peninsula for an indefinite time, that, as soon as the present crisis shall appear to be over, you would send home the excess of your force, after keeping 30,000 effective rank and file in Portugal and a sufficient garrison at Cadiz; selecting, of course, these regiments to be returned home which are the least efficient, and consequently the least fitted for active service.

The question, in short, must come to this. We must make an option between a steady and continued exertion upon a considerable scale, and a great and extraordinary effort for a limited time, which neither our means, military or financial, will enable us to maintain permanently.

If it could be hoped that the latter would bring the contest to a speedy and successful conclusion, it would certainly be the wisest course; but, unfortunately, the experience of the last fifteen years is not encouraging in this respect.

Ever most sincerely yours,

Liverpool.

Certainly Liverpool can never be charged with not giving Wellington all the support in his power. Later in the same year he wrote that he had obtained permission from the Admiralty

for Wellington to borrow "the lower-deck guns of the men-of-war in the Tagus, and availing himself of the assistance of the seamen and marines of the fleet for the purpose of manning them," if he should think such a step desirable for the strengthening of his lines of defence at Torres Vedras.

Liverpool was also officially responsible for the affairs of the colonies. In 1768 the office of Secretary of State for the American Colonies had been created, but it had been abolished in 1782, and from then until 1801 the colonies were under the control of the Home Secretary, when they were handed over to the War Office. This was not a particularly happy arrangement, and with the conduct of the Peninsular War as well as the leadership of the House of Lords on his hands, Liverpool cannot have had much time to devote to the colonies. He obviously, however, took this part of his work with his usual seriousness, and was careful to inform himself accurately of the problems to be faced, as one instance, that of Canada, will suffice to prove.

In 1791 the Canada Act had been passed, and by this measure the country had been divided into two provinces, namely Upper and Lower Canada. To each of the two provinces was assigned a Governor with his executive, a popular Assembly, and a Legislative Council consisting of members nominated by the Crown. The Executive was independent of the Assembly, and was not in any way responsible to it, being the creature of the Crown, and it was able to carry on the government of the country and to raise money without the consent of the Assembly. In 1810 Sir James Craig, then British Governor and commander-in-chief in Canada, wrote to Liverpool with the suggestion that the Canada Act should be modified in some such way as to render it more palatable to the French Canadians, who were showing some disturbing signs of sympathy with Napoleon. Liverpool replied:

Dear Sir,

I do not know whether my public despatches by this mail will prove satisfactory to you.

I can assure you that the subject of your very able letter has been most anxiously considered, not only by those who are immediately the King's confidential servants, but by the Attorney-General and by the Master of

the Rolls,<sup>1</sup> who has much local knowledge of Canada from having passed the early part of his life in that country. It would be wasting your time to repeat to you in a private letter those considerations which you will find fully brought before you in my public despatch. But there is one circumstance to which I would wish particularly to draw your attention, a circumstance to which I have obliquely alluded in my public letter, but which for reasons sufficiently obvious it was impossible for me to explain in such a letter so explicitly as I can in a private communication.

You may rely upon it, that if the subject of the constitution of Canada was brought under discussion of the British Parliament, the cause of the Canadians would be warmly supported by all the democrats and friends of reform in this country. It would most probably receive the support likewise, under present circumstances, of Lord Grenville, the original framer of the Act of 1791, and of his friends. The support of so powerful a combination, even if it was for the moment successfully resisted, could not fail to have the effect of encouraging the factious and disaffected in Canada. They would look to the chance of their friends coming into Government for a revision and alteration of the system which might at this time be adopted. In short, we should have the game of the American war played over again.

The object of Opposition would be, in the first instance, to embarrass the Government, but by the measures they would adopt for that purpose they might separate the North American colonies from the mother country. Another consideration impresses itself very strongly on our minds, that every endeavour would be made in Parliament to connect the questions of Government in Canada with the Catholic question in Ireland. It may be admitted that some connexion might not unfairly be considered as existing between them. The introduction, however, of such a topic might be productive of the most unfortunate results, both in Ireland and Canada, especially at the present time.

We are therefore clearly of opinion that the great object ought to be to keep the subject of Canada out of Parliament so long as possible, unless a connexion could be proved between the popular party in Canada and the Government of France.

In that case I am convinced there would be no difficulty in carrying out the most effectual measures, even the abolition of the Constitution of 1791. But, in any other alternative except this, I dread no proceeding so strongly as an appeal to Parliament.

In communicating to you these sentiments, I can assure you that we are all fully convinced of the evils which have arisen from the Act of 1791, and of the absurdity of attempting to give what is falsely called the British constitution to a people whose education, habits, and prejudices render them incapable of receiving it. But the evil is done; our steps cannot be easily retraced. We must endeavour, in the first instance, to make the best use we can of the instrument which has been put into our hands, but above all we must avoid tampering with it. If Parliament is to be called upon for

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Grant.

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its interposition, it must be by the most decisive and effectual measures, such as will prevent altogether the recurrence of the evils again; and it appears to us that it would be in vain to expect the adoption of such measures from Parliament without a case far stronger, and very different in its nature, than that which we could bring at present under their consideration.

With respect to any military attempt of Buonaparte upon Canada, I can assure you that at present his hands are too full for any such operation. It is evident that he has not the military means of making as large an effort in Spain and Portugal as his interest and reputation require. As long as the contest can be maintained in that quarter upon its present scale we need be under little apprehension for more distant objects.

I am happy in being able to acquaint you with what I have no doubt you will have heard from many other quarters, and particularly from some of your professional friends, that the events of this campaign have exceeded our most sanguine expectations, and certainly afford no very unreasonable expectation that the contest in the Peninsula may finally prove successful.

At all events, if the French are not expelled from the country, many years must elapse before they can obtain sufficiently quiet possession of it to enable them to avail themselves of its resources, and to direct them against the King's dominions.

I am, etc.,

Liverpool.

In addition to the multifarious activities of his department Liverpool had, owing to the prominent position which he had now achieved in public life, many other claims upon his time, but that he still took a keen interest in his old university is proved by his action when Portland died in October 1809. The duke had been Chancellor of Oxford, and it was known that Grenville was ambitious to succeed him, so a number of Tory Heads of Houses asked Liverpool to let his name go forward too. He was by no means unwilling, but hearing that the Duke of Beaufort was determined to stand anyhow, and being desirous that the Tory vote should not be split, he declined the invitation. A rumour then got round that Beaufort would not be a candidate after all, so the Tories nominated the Lord Chancellor, Eldon. At this point it was announced that Beaufort would stand, so the evil which Liverpool had sacrificed his own pretensions to avert was incurred. The upshot was that although the two Tory candidates polled over 700 votes between them, Grenville won by a majority of 13 over Eldon. The incident is not untypical of Oxford politics at any epoch.

Meanwhile, an event of the utmost political importance had taken place, and that was the final relapse of the King into insanity in the year 1810. He had just celebrated his golden jubilee, and with all his faults he was undoubtedly more popular than any British monarch had been since the days of Charles II, but two events had occurred to sadden him. One was the death of his favourite daughter, Amelia, and the other was the disgrace of the Duke of York. Although the Duke had proved a most unfortunate general during the earlier wars against the French Revolution, he was an extremely competent administrator, and had done much to improve conditions in the army. Unhappily he had a mistress, Mrs. Clarke, who had accepted bribes to procure military appointments,<sup>1</sup> and when in due course she passed with her fading charms into the keeping of a Colonel Wardle, M.P., she did all she could to establish the truth of the proverb that "Hell holds no fury like a woman scorned" by trying to revenge herself on her royal lover. The whole question of the position of the Duke of York as commander-in-chief was raised in Parliament, and although in the end the House of Commons acquitted him not only of corruption, but even of connivance at corruption, the majority in his favour was small, and he thought it better to resign. The failure of the Walcheren expedition also weighed heavily upon the King's mind, which, in November 1810, became finally unhinged.

At first it was hoped that George would recover, as he had done on previous occasions, and Liverpool wrote to Wellington that "the reports of all the physicians who attend him are so far favorable, that they agree in giving the most confident expectations of his recovery. I trust this event will happen speedily, and before it can be necessary to take any steps for filling up the defect in the royal authority, for I am thoroughly convinced that, if a regency is once established, the King never will recover." The Opposition refused to take into account the chances of an improvement, and clamoured for the immediate establishment of a regency, since they were convinced that once he had the power the Prince of Wales would instate them in office. "We had," wrote Liverpool, "a most disagreeable

<sup>1</sup> All this happened before Liverpool went to the War Office.

scene in the two Houses of Parliament on Thursday last.<sup>1</sup> The feeling and temper of the country are, however, as good as possible, and our majorities were respectable. But the conduct of Lord Grenville on this occasion was beyond anything we could have conceived."

The doctors proved to be too optimistic, and the regency duly came into existence, but not until after debates of very considerable violence. The Whigs were particularly formidable in the Upper House, where their leading men, such as Grenville, Grey, and Holland, were to be found. This imposed a special responsibility upon Liverpool, who had to answer them, but he was generally considered to have quitted himself more than adequately. The chief point at issue was whether there were to be restrictions upon the Regent's powers, and the imposition of any was opposed both by the Prince of Wales and the Whigs. The firmness of the government, however, carried the day, and on February 5th, 1811, the Prince became Regent under several temporary limitations. With certain exceptions, he was precluded from granting any peerage or office tenable for life; the royal property was vested in trustees for the King's benefit; and the personal care of the King was entrusted to the Queen, with the advice of a council. Twelve months later these restrictions came to an end, but by then "Prinny" had lost most of his enthusiasm for Whiggery. He had come to appreciate the services of Perceval and Liverpool, while he increasingly resented the dictatorial tone assumed towards him by Grenville and Grey, who wished to separate him from old friends like Sheridan and Moira. So the Whigs were disappointed, and the ministry remained in office. The old pupil of Fox had become a Tory.

If the ministry was unchanged, every effort was made to strengthen it, for Perceval and Liverpool were under no illusions as to its weakness, and during the greater part of the year 1810 negotiations were in progress for the inclusion in the Cabinet of the Tory leaders who remained outside the government. Canning had been succeeded at the Foreign Office by Wellesley, and it was he who principally urged upon the Prime Minister the need of reinforcing the ministry. Wellesley's

<sup>1</sup> November 29th, 1810.

original intention was to include Canning, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth in the administration, but the plan failed because Sidmouth refused to sit in the same Cabinet as Canning. Wellesley next, in June of the same year, proposed to resign the Foreign Office to Canning, which the latter agreed to accept provided that Wellesley himself remained in the government, and that arrangements were made to suit his friends. This negotiation, too, broke down in September.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1812 Wellesley himself resigned. He was actuated by two motives, namely differences of opinion with his colleagues on the Roman Catholic question, and his annoyance at what he considered, somewhat unjustly, to be the lack of vigour they were displaying in the prosecution of the war. This resignation at first sight appeared to provide an excellent opportunity for a general reconstruction of the ministry, especially as the Lord President followed the Foreign Secretary into retirement. Canning was once more approached, and on March 18th, 1812, he replied with a letter to Liverpool which gives a clear idea both of his political attitude at the time and of the relations existing between the two old friends:

I have communicated to such of my friends as I had an immediate opportunity of consulting the minute taken in your presence of the proposition which you conveyed to me yesterday.

In a case in which I felt that my decision either way might be liable to misapprehension, I was desirous rather to collect the opinions of persons whose judgment I esteemed than to act on the impulse of my own first feeling.

The result of their opinions is, that by entering into the Administration upon the terms proposed to me, I should incur such a loss of personal and public character as would disappoint the object which H.R.H. the P.R. has at heart, and must render my accession to his Government a new source of weakness rather than an addition of strength.

To become a part of your Administration with the previous knowledge of your unaltered opinions as to the Policy of resisting all consideration of the state of the laws affecting His Majesty's Catholic subjects would, it is felt, be to lend myself to the defeating of my own declared opinions on that most important question—opinions which are as far as those of any man from being favourable to precipitate an unqualified concession, but which rest on the conviction that it is the duty of the advisers of the Crown,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bagot, J., *George Canning and His Friends*, vol. I, pp. 358-9, and Walpole, Sir Spencer, *Life of Perceval*, vol. II, p. 136 *et seq.*

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with a view to the peace, tranquillity, and strength of the Empire, to take that whole question into their early and serious consideration and earnestly to endeavour to bring it to a final and satisfactory settlement.

With this result of the opinions of those whom I have consulted, my own entirely concurs; and such being the ground of my decision, it is wholly unnecessary to advert to any topics of inferior importance.

After the expressions, however, with which you were charged on the part of all your Colleagues, I should not be warranted in omitting to declare that no objection of a personal sort should have prevented me from uniting with any or all of them in the publick service, if I could have done so with honour, and if in my judgment a Cabinet so constituted in all its parts could have afforded to the country, under its present great and varied difficulties, an adequately efficient administration.

I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of adding that the manner of your communication with me had entirely corresponded with the habits and sentiments of a friendship of so many years: a friendship which our general concurrence on many great political principles has strengthened, and which our occasional differences have in no degree impaired.<sup>1</sup>

An unsuccessful attempt, it may be added, was also made to include Grenville and Grey in the administration, but the only accession of strength that was finally obtained was provided by the inclusion of Sidmouth and Castlereagh in the ministry.

It is difficult at this distance of time to realize the bitterness which the question of Catholic Emancipation roused at the beginning of last century, or to understand why men of the stature of Liverpool and Perceval should have been so strongly opposed to any concession. Prejudice, not principle, though it may masquerade as such, too often sways the rank-and-file of great parties, and so it seems to have been on this occasion. All the Tory strongholds held out against any concession to Roman Catholics. The Anglican clergy, the universities, and the country gentry, all of whom had been drinking healths to a Roman Catholic King over the water not so many years before, were solidly anti-Catholic, and their leaders, seeing from what quarter the wind was blowing, were content to follow where they ought to have led. In England and Scotland, where the number of Catholics was relatively small, no great harm was, perhaps, done by this attitude on the part of so many ministers, but it permanently embittered Anglo-Irish relations.

<sup>1</sup> Bagot, J., *George Canning and His Friends*, vol. I, pp. 387-8.



Liverpool was equally opposed to Parliamentary Reform, but here he had his party, including Canning, solidly with him. In 1810 Grey moved a resolution in favour of Reform, and in reply Liverpool stated the policy of the government. He said that he and his colleagues "had no objection to an economical reform," but they would never countenance any measure which went beyond "a practical remedy for practical grievances." Among these he did not class the inequalities in Parliamentary representation on which the Whig leader had dwelt, but which he himself believed to be only apparent, and to have no reality. On the contrary, "he would say that he believed there never was a period in our history when the representation of the people in Parliament was less unequal. That it was unequal in theory he would admit, but that theoretic inequality he regarded as one of the greatest advantages of our constitution. This was the opinion of that enlightened statesman Mr. Burke, who said that it was this peculiarity in its constitution which made it, instead of an assembly of deputies, an entire and perfect deliberative meeting. For himself, he had carefully examined all the plans of reform that had been submitted to Parliament at various times, and he would fairly state that there was not one of them to which he did not see insuperable objections. One of these plans, brought forward by the noble mover, certainly not the most objectionable, aimed at making population and not property the basis of representation. Such a change he thought could not but be exceedingly injurious in its effects."

The reconstruction of the ministry in the spring of 1812 had not, as we have seen, strengthened it to the extent that had been hoped, but the inclusion of Castlereagh was a definite asset; and the wind seemed set fair, when, on May 11th, Perceval was shot as he was entering the lobby of the House of Commons. At first it was believed that the murder of the Prime Minister was part of some widespread conspiracy against the government, and there was general alarm at Westminster; but it was soon proved to be the act of a maniac, one Bellingham, a bankrupt merchant, who hardly knew his victim by sight, but believed that the ministry was responsible for his misfortunes. A political crisis of the first importance had once more arisen.

## CHAPTER V

### FIRST YEARS AS PRIME MINISTER

1812-1814

THE murder of Perceval was followed by a series of intrigues which, it must be confessed, do not redound to the credit of the majority of those who participated in them, but which throw a good deal of light upon the men who were to be Liverpool's associates and enemies during the fifteen years that lay ahead. The first decision of both the Regent and the ministers was that there should be no change in the administration save such as was necessary to fill the two most important posts held by the dead man, namely the Premiership and the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Without much discussion it was soon decided that Liverpool should be Prime Minister, and that as such he should invite the accession of those whose co-operation it was desired to gain. Of these, the most important were Wellesley, Grey, and Grenville among the peers, and Canning in the House of Commons. Of the four, Grey and Grenville seemed out of the question owing to their recent refusal to join the ministry, but the case was very different where Wellesley and Canning were concerned: with the single exception of Catholic Emancipation there was no difference between them and the Cabinet on the general policy to be pursued, and to them Liverpool accordingly turned.

He cannot, however, have entertained much hope of succeeding with Wellesley in view of the attitude which the latter had adopted two months earlier, and if he was pessimistic he proved to be right. Wellesley refused to join the government, partly because he disagreed with its attitude on the Catholic question, and partly because of "the imperfect scale on which the efforts in the Peninsula were conducted,"

though in point of fact Wellington, his own brother, had already declared that his complaints on this score were groundless. At first it appeared as if Canning would prove more amenable, although the leadership of the House of Commons had been promised to Castlereagh, for he had said that "no objection of a personal sort should prevent him from uniting with the existing administration in the public service, if he could do so with honour." The differences over Catholic Emancipation, however, soon proved insuperable, and Canning, too, expressed his inability to join the ministry.

When these negotiations had failed, there seemed to be no other course open to the administration but to close its ranks and carry on: this it proceeded to do, and Nicholas Vansittart<sup>1</sup> was appointed to fill Perceval's place at the Exchequer. On May 21st, however, a back bencher, Stuart Wortley, one of the members for Yorkshire, moved an address to the Regent "praying him, under the present circumstances of the country, to form a strong and efficient administration." This was naturally treated by the government as a vote of no confidence, and when the motion was carried, after an official amendment had been defeated, albeit only by a majority of four in a very thin house, the ministry resigned.

The Regent had now no other alternative but to do his best to comply with the wishes of the House of Commons, and he therefore called on Wellesley to form a government with the widest possible basis. Wellesley accepted the task, and at once approached Canning, who readily agreed to co-operate with him, as the following letter (from Canning to Wellesley) clearly proves:

I have written to Lord Liverpool and to Lord Melville, to propose to call upon them, and I will come to you as soon as I have seen them.

In the meantime I think it desirable to state in writing for our mutual satisfaction, my understanding of the Principles on which you undertake the execution of H.R.H.'s the Prince Regent's commands, for the formation of an Administration, and on which I am cordially disposed to act with you.

I understand these Principles to be, first, that the whole question relating to the Roman Catholics shall be taken into early and serious consideration, with a sincere and anxious desire to bring it to a final and satisfactory

<sup>1</sup> He had been Secretary to the Treasury 1801-1804, and again 1806-1807; and Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1805.

settlement. Secondly, that the war in the Peninsula shall be prosecuted with the best means of the Country.

And I understand you to be ready and desirous to comprehend in your arrangement, all persons of whatever party connection, who are proposed to act upon both these principles. The latter of them subject of course to such modification, as the varying circumstances of this Country, of the war, and of the state of Europe may require.

Upon these principles I am ready to co-operate in your Administration with any persons who may be induced to accept your proposals, agreeing to lay aside such minor points of difference as may admit of postponement, or endeavouring to come to a common understanding upon such of them as may be susceptible of adjustment. The state of the Country appears to me to make it the duty of every man to soften and reduce, as much as possible, all grounds of unessential disagreement.

In acting upon these principles I have myself no personal objections. I hope none will be made in any quarter. But I think it right to apprise you, that, while I protest against any such exceptions, if unfortunately the arrangement should be in the hazard of being defeated by the pressing of any personal pretensions against objections, which, after every fair effort to surmount them, shall appear for the present moment absolutely insurmountable, much as I shall regret the circumstance, I shall not think it consistent with my public duty, after having once embarked in the undertaking, to make the admission of pretensions merely personal (however natural I may think them) a *sine qua non* condition of my perseverance in it.

On the other hand should any personal objection be taken to acting with me (as I know has been done on former occasions) I earnestly beg and insist, that no pretensions of mine may be suffered to stand in the way of an arrangement, otherwise agreeable to H.R.H. the Prince Regent, and calculated to afford to the country the advantage of an efficient and comprehensive administration.<sup>1</sup>

Canning, however, was no more successful with Liverpool than Liverpool had been with him, and the retiring ministers seem to have been somewhat incensed against Wellesley by Press reports of criticisms of Perceval which he was alleged to have made. Anyhow, Liverpool, in his reply, deliberately abstained from entering into any discussion as to the proposed policy of the new government because he and his colleagues "all felt themselves bound, particularly after what had recently passed, to decline the proposal of becoming members of an administration to be formed by Lord Wellesley." Canning returned to the charge by remonstrating in a most friendly manner against Liverpool's refusal to discuss the proposition on

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MSS. 38738 f. 227.

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grounds of what seemed to be nothing more than personal hostility to Wellesley. In this second attempt he also failed, as the following letter shows:

Fife House,<sup>1</sup>

May 24th, 1812.

My dear Canning,

I have this moment received your answer to my letter of last night.

As that letter was not written without due consideration, I do not feel that it can be necessary for me to call my colleagues again together upon the subject of it.

I can answer however for myself (and I am confident equally for them), that I am not actuated in declining the proposals made to us by any objection of a nature *purely personal*; but when I advert to the opinions and statements recently sent forth to the world respecting public men with whom I have been connected, and public measures in which I have been engaged, I do not feel that I should have acted consistently with my own honour and character, or with the respect which I must ever, and shall ever, feel to my departed friend, if, under such circumstances, I could have consented to have entertained the proposal which you were authorised to submit to me.

As these considerations afforded an insuperable obstacle to my becoming a party to the proposed arrangements, I thought it wholly unnecessary to enter into any explanation on the two principles on which the Administration is stated as being intended to be formed, or on other points of the greatest public importance; and I must protest against any inference whatever being drawn from my silence in this respect.

I can assure you that I am most willing to render you every degree of justice for the motives which have dictated your answer to my letter, and I remain,

Yours, etc.,

Liverpool.

Meanwhile, Wellesley's negotiations with the Whig leaders had also proved unsuccessful, for they refused to support any measures for increased military activity in the Peninsula, and they maintained that the financial position of the country rendered any such policy impracticable. At this point Wellesley abandoned his efforts to form a government.

The Regent now turned once more to the retiring ministers, and asked them to return to office, but it soon transpired that they took a different view of the situation. They formally expressed to the Prince "their declared conviction that no

<sup>1</sup> Liverpool used 10 Downing Street as an office, but lived at Fife House in Whitehall. It was demolished in 1862.

public benefit was likely to arise from any further attempt being made to bring about an union between them and Marquess Wellesley and Mr. Canning," and they advised that "he would be graciously pleased to take such immediate measures as might appear most advisable to himself for filling up the principal offices of the government." The Regent then summoned them to a personal conference, ostensibly because "he was desirous to learn from each of them the grounds of the opinions which they had thus communicated to him," but probably because he hoped that in private conversation he might be able to persuade them to change their minds. However, it was he that changed his, for instead of granting audiences, he asked them to put their reasons individually in writing. Liverpool's reply left him in no doubt of the attitude of the Tory leaders:

Fife House,

*May 28th, 1812.*

Lord Liverpool has the honour to inform your Royal Highness, in obedience to your Royal Highness's commands, that he concurred in the opinion contained in the paper which was transmitted to your Royal Highness by your confidential servants yesterday, respecting an union between your present servants and Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning, for the following reasons:

First, because he is most fully satisfied, from all that has recently passed, that the difference of opinion which exists between Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning on the one hand, and himself on the other, on the subject of the Roman Catholic claims, is so essential, not only as regards the points of the question itself, but as to the conduct which it is the duty of Government to pursue respecting it, that there is no probability that, under present circumstances, they could co-operate with advantage as ministers of the Crown, in the public service.

Secondly, because Lord Liverpool is convinced that, however desirable it must have been to procure an accession of strength,<sup>1</sup> in order to enable your Royal Highness's present servants to carry on the administration of government successfully, the advantage of the assistance of Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning could only at this time have been obtained by the loss of strength in other quarters not less important. The proposed arrangement could not therefore have been made with a better prospect of ultimate success, and it would have been purchased by sacrifices which would have been inconsistent with the honour and character of the persons who were parties to it.

<sup>1</sup> Canning's personal following in the House of Commons numbered between fifteen and twenty.

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This was clearly final so far as Liverpool and his friends were concerned, so the Regent asked Wellesley to try again. Once more an attempt was made at a coalition with the Opposition, and once more it failed owing to the exaggerated value which the Whig leaders put upon their services. Sheridan published a little squib on them, the stinging truth of which was not calculated to recommend them to the Regent:

In all humility we crave  
Our Regent may become our slave,  
And being so, we trust that He  
Will thank us for our loyalty.  
Then if he'll help us to pull down  
His Father's dignity and Crown,  
We'll make him, in some time to come,  
The greatest Prince in Christendom.

For a second time Wellesley had to confess failure, and the Prince commissioned his friend Moira, who had held office under Grenville, to form a purely Whig administration. Then was seen the truth of Sheridan's lines, for it was soon obvious that Grey was above all things determined to humiliate the Regent for having left his party, for he demanded that there should be a change in the great officers of the Household: the officials in question were quite willing to resign, but the Whig leaders insisted that this resignation should be dictated by them, and on this point the negotiation broke down. Every other alternative having now been tried, Liverpool was obviously the only solution, and on June 8th, 1812, he finally became Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury. The House of Commons recognized the inevitability of what had happened by giving the new government a majority of 125 on its first vote of confidence.

The Cabinet was composed as follows:

First Lord of the Treasury	Earl of Liverpool
Secretary of State (Home)	Viscount Sidmouth
Secretary of State (Foreign)	Viscount Castlereagh
Secretary of State (War and Colonies)	Earl Bathurst
Lord President of the Council	Earl of Harrowby

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Lord Chancellor	Lord Eldon
Lord Privy Seal	Earl of Westmorland
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Nicholas Vansittart
First Lord of the Admiralty	Viscount Melville
Master-General of the Ordnance	Lord Mulgrave
President of the Board of Control	Earl of Buckinghamshire
Without Portfolio	Marquess Camden

Other ministers were:

President of the Board of Trade	Earl of Clancarty
Secretary at War	Viscount Palmerston
Attorney-General	Sir Thomas Plumer
Solicitor-General	Sir William Garrow
Master of the Rolls	Sir William Grant
Lord Lieutenant of Ireland	Duke of Richmond
Chief Secretary for Ireland	Robert Peel
Lord Chancellor of Ireland	Lord Mannors
Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland	W. Fitzgerald

It was nothing like so strong an administration as either of its immediate predecessors, and Liverpool probably regarded this list of ministers as purely provisional, for he immediately opened negotiations for the inclusion of Canning and his friends; had these been successful they would necessarily have occasioned several alterations in the ministry.

The correspondence which ensued was voluminous, for the statesmen of those days were copious letter-writers, but a few extracts from it will serve to illustrate the point of view of the leading actors. First of all there is a letter from William Huskisson, a strong Canningite, to Charles Arbuthnot, a Joint Secretary to the Treasury.

Friday morning, *July 17th.*

I have seen Canning for a moment this morning. He is going to Liverpool's with this feeling—the result, I can assure you, of much dispassionate reflection on everything that has passed—namely—that he is anxious to give strength and stability to the Govt., and for this purpose he would be disposed with the most perfect cordiality to serve *with* Castlereagh, but that he cannot serve *under* him.

I should be doing Canning great injustice if I did not say that he is



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driven to this conclusion, not by any disposition to throw a difficulty in the way of an arrangement, or even to stand upon that difficulty, if created by another person, but it is an impression grown out of the strong feelings of his friends, which in such a case must have great influence upon his own, and not out of their repugnance only, but it is also the result of the decided opinion of every impartial man whom he has consulted. This last test of what the public feeling would be, has necessarily great weight with Canning, and so general, I am confident, is the impression upon which it is founded, that if Castlereagh, taking a similar course, would submit his claim of the *lead* to the same List, the result could not be doubtful.

From my having witnessed the whole progress of the workings of Ch's mind on this occasion I can most positively vouch to you for one thing, that it has been a struggle to endeavour to convince himself that he might with safety to his own honour and character, and with advantage to the Govt., acquiesce in the projected alternative, and that his decision is fairly taken, not upon any personal pretension, or from any unfriendly feeling towards the Govt., but that from a conviction that if he came in upon an arrangement condemned by his friends, and, as far as he could collect likely to be thought unsuitable by the Public, any junction upon such a footing would be a gratification to none but his personal enemies, and the general enemies of the Govt. itself; to those only whose chief satisfaction would be to see him committed to an arrangement, which without setting up the Govt., might lower him in the estimation of the House and of the Country.

These are his genuine feelings. He would be happy if any solution could be found to the difficulty. The result of this morning's meeting will show whether there is a chance of any such solution.<sup>1</sup>

Canning duly saw Liverpool, but the vexed question of the leadership in the House of Commons would seem to have arisen at once, to judge by the following letter from Canning to Arbuthnot:

Gloucester Lodge,

Saturday, *July 18th*, 1812.

I am most sincerely obliged to you for your letter. I do assure you (what perhaps in most cases is not a matter that requires much assurance) that I am sincerely desirous of coming into the Regent's service, & that I should consider a re-union with Liverpool in office as an object the most desirable, publicly and privately. But the price to be paid on coming in would cost me a bitter pang—*not* from any personal feeling towards C upon my honour, but from a sense of humiliation—hard to endure, & I *think* unnecessary to be proposed to me. I have not demanded the lead for myself. It is not my fault that such a thing as lead has been known or

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MSS. 38738 f. 271.

named in these discussions. I should be contented if it could be put in abeyance as between C. and me—as it would be if continuing nominally with the Chancp. of the Ex. in a third hand—even in Van's. Why not? He can live in the house—write the letters—give the dinner, & read the Speech—and C. and I could assist him in the House, doing the business of our respective Departments.

As to Department—I need not tell you that my offer to take the Chancp. of the Ex. was really what it professed to be, an attempt at solving a difficulty. I need not tell you that the Foreign Office is the only one for which in point of taste & liking I have a decided preference—that as to office therefore I am perfectly contented. Could C. be prevailed upon to take the Home Department? With Ireland and the Catholics on the one hand, & the present state of the interior of the country on the other—it is most important—it is *first* in rank of Secs. of State—and this arrangement would *silently* remove another obstacle in Ld. S. to which I have not pressed any objection—lest my motives should be mistaken, but which must be insuperable, on acct. of appearance and impression in Ireland. Much rather had I, however, that it was removed without any objection of mine; & merely as a matter of arrangement.

You will judge by the openness with which I have written to you that I take your letter exactly in the spirit in which it is intended. If you should have anything that you wished to say to me, I shall be at Huskisson's from about 12 to near one.

I *must* press Pole for Cabinet. But Sec. at War I should think would do—or Mint. When a Cabinet is 14 (as all must stay I find) the 15th makes no great difference.<sup>1</sup>

By way of a compromise Canning then suggested that the leadership should be given to Vansittart, but Castlereagh declared that although he was quite willing to resign the Foreign Office to Canning, he would not join any administration in which he did not himself lead the House of Commons. Canning's comment on this brought the negotiations to a close.

*Private.*

Gloucester Lodge,  
July 27th, 1812.

My dear Liverpool,

I return Lord Castlereagh's letter. I had not imagined it, upon your reading it over to me this morning, to be half so strong and so precise as upon reading it and considering it myself I find it to be. Nor would my apprehensions, perhaps, have been awakened about it at all (conceiving your subsequent agreement to supersede whatever might previously have passed between Lord Castlereagh and you in any previous discussion), had

<sup>1</sup> *The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot* (edited by A. Aspinall), pp. 7-8.

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I not heard of the existence of this letter, after I left you, in a way which leaves me little doubt that I may hear of it often again.

With this letter in existence, and uncontradicted, I cannot consider any such agreement as was made with you at all satisfactory. Lord Castlereagh would always be at liberty to say that he had positively refused to acquiesce in a "principle of equality" between us, upon which alone I can consent to act, and which I thought might be attained as well by mutual compromise as by precise parity of situation. He will always be at liberty to say that he positively refused to consent to that arrangement as a "previous stipulation," which, if it be not matter of stipulation on my part (as alone I would take it), it must be a matter of grace and favour on his.

The result is, I am afraid, that nothing can be made of our attempts, sincere on my part, I assure you, and I firmly believe on yours, to reconcile my claim of equality with his of pre-eminence; and I have therefore only to repeat that, after considering this letter, I feel more strongly than ever that I will not go into the House of Commons *under* Lord Castlereagh.

Ever, my dear Liverpool,

Very sincerely yours,

George Canning.

Thus another Tory ministry was formed from which Canning was excluded, and his attitude shows that he had learnt nothing during the three previous years, but still believed that he could enter any administration on his own terms. This time, however, he did not display any of the bitterness towards his old colleagues that had followed the resignation of Portland, and he was the first to acknowledge the magnanimity of Castlereagh in offering to resign the Foreign Office in his favour. Yet there can be no doubt but that his obstinacy was his ruin once again, and so it, combined with his failure to control his impatience, resulted in him having to give place to Castlereagh, with all which that was to mean in the years which lay immediately ahead. The final outcome, however, was that he now began to learn his lesson, and impulsive as his temperament remained to the end, Canning, like Disraeli, in later life acquired the art of giving an appearance of moderation which stood him in good stead.

In this way Liverpool attained the highest office in the State, open to a subject, on the day after his forty-second birthday, and it can hardly be denied that few men have been so well qualified to become Prime Minister. His experience of public life and of the working of the Constitution was extensive: he

had filled successively every Secretaryship of State, and had thus acquired a thorough personal acquaintance with all their duties and details; he had for the previous five years been leader of the House of Lords; and, what was of even more importance, every attempt to find another successor to Perceval except himself had failed, so that there was no potential rival. These would be assets in any age, but they were specially so at that time when Liverpool's experience is contrasted with the lack of it on the part of his recent predecessors, for Rockingham, Grafton, Portland, and Addington had never held any office when they were first made Prime Minister, while Bute and the younger Pitt had each held but a single Cabinet office for a few months, and no office at all out of the Cabinet. On the other hand, when Liverpool first took over the reins of government there was no important branch of the administration with which he was not thoroughly familiar.

The legacy to which he succeeded was far from encouraging either abroad or at home.

The façade of the French Empire seemed as imposing as ever, though, to the observant, Talleyrand appeared to have much justification for his belief that in reality the tide had turned. The enforcement of the Continental System meant a progressive dissipation of French strength, while the system itself was goading the subject nations, particularly Germany, to revolt. Even Napoleon's own brother, Louis, King of Holland, refused to enforce it, but in his case retribution was swift, for Holland was annexed by France, and Louis consequently lost his throne. In the same year, 1810, the French domination over the North Sea coast was extended by the annexation of a corner of Germany, and as a result the Duchy of Oldenburg, which belonged to a branch of the Russian Imperial Family, ceased to exist. This was a flagrant violation of the Treaty of Tilsit, but it was wholly in the Napoleonic tradition.

The prospect of war between France and Russia was, in fact, gradually becoming more certain, and it was hastened when, in January 1811, the Tsar declared Russian ports open to all vessels sailing under a neutral flag, and imposed duties on many French products. Yet neither side was in any hurry to precipitate the crisis which both were coming to believe was inevitable,

and seventeen months were yet to elapse before hostilities actually began. One reason for the delay was that both France and Russia had certain commitments of which it was advisable to be quit before coming to grips with one another. The Tsar was at war with the Turks, and it was not until 1812 that he was able to make peace with them by the Treaty of Bucharest, when Russia obtained possession of Bessarabia. The Tsar had thus protected his rear and flank. Napoleon was not so fortunate, for he had an apparently interminable war with Britain on his hands; though why he made no effort to put an end to the Peninsular War, which he could easily have done at this time had he assumed command of the French armies himself, is one of the mysteries of history.

The other Continental Powers were more apprehensive than expectant. They had seen so many coalitions go down before Napoleon that they had no mind to try their fortunes again until they saw some sign that France was weakening. Prussia endeavoured at one moment to assert herself, but she was forced to come to heel when the French whip was cracked, and the final conditions imposed upon her were humiliating in the extreme. She was compelled to supply Napoleon with 20,000 men to serve as part of the French army, and she promised not to raise any other levies without the Emperor's consent. She had also to afford a free passage, and to provide food and forage, for the French troops, and payment for this was to be made at a later date. All that Prussia received in return was a reduction in the war indemnity due to France. As for Austria, she was in no position to resist. She had been humiliated by the sacrifice of her Emperor's daughter to Napoleon as his wife, while she was practically bankrupt, with government paper at a discount of ninety per cent.

In 1811 the threatened war was brought a step nearer, and Liverpool wrote to Wellington that he saw "appearances of a renewed conflict in the North of Europe; and it would be a great question to determine what advantage could be taken of it, if it should occur." In August of that year Napoleon indulged at the expense of the Russian ambassador in one of those calculated outbursts of fury such as had preceded the rupture with Britain in 1803, and he also withdrew 60,000 of his best

troops from the Peninsula. It was, however, too late that year to commence a campaign against such a country as Russia, and so hostilities were once more postponed. Yet they had become inevitable unless the Tsar gave way, and of his doing so there was not the least indication. Napoleon's system depended for its very existence upon the adherence of every Continental nation, and if Russia would not co-operate willingly then the only alternative was force. The French Emperor believed, of course, that the war was forced upon him in defence of France, and it was in the name of security that he finally marched to Moscow.

Throughout the winter of 1811-1812 the whole of Europe rang with the preparations for the coming struggle, and both sides looked round for possible allies. Napoleon, as has been shown, had no great difficulty in compelling Prussia to obey his orders, but Austria was able, chiefly owing to her geographical position, to secure better terms. She was to provide an army of 30,000 men to guard the French flank in Volhynia, while in return Napoleon guaranteed the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and promised the restoration of the Illyrian provinces in exchange for Galicia, which was to form part of a reconstituted Poland. Sweden, on the other hand, with the Baltic between her and the *grande armée*, resisted the blandishments of France, and concluded an alliance with the Tsar. Finally, in April 1812, Napoleon made overtures to Britain, in which he offered to evacuate Spain, and to recognize the House of Braganza in Portugal and the Bourbons in Sicily, if the British government would accept the "actual dynasty" in Spain and Murat in Naples. The phrase was ambiguous, and Castlereagh was instructed to refuse to recognize Joseph, but to declare his readiness to discuss the proposed basis if by "actual dynasty" was meant Ferdinand VII. No answer was received from Paris, and Napoleon told the French people that Britain had rejected his offer of peace.

Russia in her turn had to come to terms with Turkey, Sweden, Persia, and Great Britain. Her negotiations with the first two have already been discussed; with Persia no settlement proved possible; and, after some haggling, the British government promised financial aid to Russia, while the Tsar, as

evidence of good faith, handed over his Baltic fleet to Britain for safe keeping. In spite of appearances to the contrary, Russia was really in a stronger position than France in the matter of alliances, for her allies were devoted to her cause, since her interests and theirs were identical, whereas it was fear alone that bound Prussia and Austria to Napoleon. Such were the circumstances in which, on June 24th, 1812, the French Emperor crossed the Niemen at the head of 630,000 men.

While these events were taking place in central and eastern Europe, and Liverpool was settling down to his fifteen years' Premiership, the attention of the British public had been rather directed towards the campaign in the Peninsula. They were anxious years, for Wellington had often to abandon his hard-won gains, and there were reverses which caused the greater disappointment in that they followed hard on the heels of victory, for each winter he had to fall back on his base. Talavera in 1809 and Busaco in 1810 were both succeeded by retreats, and in 1811 Wellington was very nearly at the end of his resources: the next year actually saw him in Madrid, but he was unable to maintain himself there, and it was not until the summer of 1813, four years after he had assumed command, that Wellington really began to drive the French out of Spain. These facts must be borne in mind, for it is impossible to grasp the contemporary attitude towards the war, and so the public opinion for which Liverpool had to allow, unless there are taken into account the long years of waiting, and the hope deferred, by which they were characterized.

Indeed, when one turns to a consideration of the state of England itself when Liverpool became Prime Minister it is impossible to resist the conclusion that it had deteriorated considerably during the previous five or six years. The removal of the threat of invasion had caused a sharp falling-off in the spirit of patriotism with a corresponding growth of centrifugal forces, while, as we have seen, Napoleon's decrees had been by no means without their effect in Britain. While the government and its supporters were congratulating themselves upon the elasticity of the revenue, a widespread depression began to make itself felt in consequence of the closing of the Continental market for manufactured articles. The real reason was not

appreciated by those most affected, for they attributed their troubles to recent improvements in machinery. In this way there originated the Luddite riots, which raged with special fury in the Midlands. The rioters appear to have taken their name from a poor idiot named Ludd who, in a fit of frenzy, had broken stocking-frames while seeking to wreak vengeance on some boys who had teased him. Their aspirations were summarized by Byron in the verses:

As the Liberty lads over sea,  
Bought their freedom, and cheaply, with blood,  
So we, boys, we  
Will die fighting or live free  
And down with all Kings but King Ludd.<sup>1</sup>

Bands of men traversed Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, and the southern districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, breaking open houses, carrying off arms, destroying machinery of all kinds, and in some instances not stopping short of murder. In the absence of a police force the military were called upon to preserve order, and at one time no less than seven regiments of militia were required to keep the peace in Nottingham alone. Committees of both Houses were appointed to investigate the riots, and from their reports it became obvious that the ordinary processes of law were proving insufficient to repress the disorders. Accordingly a measure was introduced by Castlereagh in the Commons, and was seen through the Lords by Liverpool, by which frame-breaking was made a capital offence. In addition, new powers were given to the magistrates to search for arms, to disperse riotous assemblies, and to exercise jurisdiction outside their own districts. Nor were these measures allowed to remain unenforced, for many Luddites were arrested, and sixteen were executed by sentence of a special commission sitting at York. These drastic methods achieved their purpose, and popular discontent in the industrial areas did not again assume so acute a form until after the war.

In the rural districts the suffering among the poor was at least as great, although, as always, it was more patiently borne, and it is not easy to say whether a good or a bad harvest pressed

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that Byron did not write these lines until the riots were over, and then from the luxurious safety of a self-imposed exile on the Lake of Geneva.



the more heavily on the agricultural worker. When the price of wheat rose to 130s. a quarter or upwards, as it did in 1812 and other years of scarcity, wages were comparatively high, but this was offset by their fall to starvation level when wheat sank to 75s.; on these latter occasions wages were supplemented out of the poor rate by a miserable system of indiscriminate outdoor relief graduated according to the size of families. Indeed, the period of the war was very far from being, as is sometimes alleged, the golden age of farming, for all engaged in the industry were adversely affected by insecurity. The opening and closing of markets according to the fortunes of war, and the high price of many articles, constituted a real hardship for the agricultural population, while the frequently recurring depressions were rendered all the more disastrous by a natural tendency to extend unduly the margin of cultivation when times were good.

There was another domestic problem which demanded Liverpool's immediate attention, and that was Catholic Emancipation, an issue on which the Tory party was becoming increasingly divided. He had hardly taken office when, on June 22nd, the House of Commons, swayed by the oratory of Canning, passed a motion in favour of Roman Catholic claims by 225 votes to 106. In view of the divisions in the ranks of their followers, the ministers decided to make Catholic Emancipation an open question: in the words of Castlereagh in the House of Commons, "In submission to the growing change of public opinion in favour of those claims, and the real sentiments of certain members of the Government, it has been resolved upon as a principle that the discussion of this question should be left free from all interference on the part of the Government, and that every member of that Government should on it be left to the free and unbiased suggestions of his own conscientious discretion."

This was not a particularly courageous decision, and it is not easy to follow Castlereagh's argument that the more pressing a problem becomes the less reason is there why the government should have an opinion on it. As for Liverpool himself, he had always been an honest opponent of Catholic claims, and there is reason to suppose that in consenting to this

compromise he yielded to pressure from some of his colleagues in the Cabinet. On the other hand it can be pleaded in his defence that he was Prime Minister in time of war, and that the war was reaching its turning-point; in these circumstances it is at least arguable that it was his duty to follow a policy of expediency and to eschew one which would create internal dissension; for not only was the Tory party divided, but there was also a division of opinion between the two Houses of Parliament, while the Regent's views were rapidly coming to approximate to those of his father, though they naturally commanded far less respect. Nor was this all, for Liverpool was still hoping to persuade Canning and his friends to join the government, which they would certainly not do if this meant abandonment of their support of the Catholic claims. Thus, Liverpool may be said to have had cogent reasons for making Emancipation an open question: whether these reasons amounted to an excuse is quite another matter.

No General Election had taken place since 1807, and the new government felt that its position both at home and abroad would be greatly strengthened if it received a fresh mandate from the electorate, so Parliament was prorogued at the end of July. Hardly had this taken place when the news arrived of Wellington's victory at Salamanca, and the pessimists were silenced where the war in the Peninsula was concerned. Six weeks later, however, Napoleon defeated the Russians at Borodino, and on September 15th he entered Moscow. Liverpool happened to be writing to Wellington on the very day that the news of Borodino reached Downing Street, so he added the following paragraphs to his letter:

*I send you enclosed the substance of the information which has this day been received from Lord Cathcart<sup>1</sup> respecting the battle between the Russians and the French on the 7th of September. By comparing this account with the French bulletins you will be enabled to form some judgment of the result of this sanguinary action, which has certainly been creditable to the Russian arms. But, what is still more important, it does not appear that either the spirit of the Russian Government or of the Russian nation has been at all subdued by the late events. On the contrary, they appear determined to persevere.*

*And, if that perseverance should continue for six weeks or two months*

<sup>1</sup> British ambassador to Russia, 1812-1819.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

longer, Buonaparte will be in a situation more critical than any in which he has ever yet been engaged. He is now nearly 800 miles from the Russian frontier, and besides the main army in his front, which is receiving reinforcements daily, he has two formidable corps on each of his flanks. What a moment for Austria to strike a blow! But this is more than we can expect.

The Prime Minister's ability to sum up a military situation was as marked as ever.

It was not only from the battle-fronts that encouraging news was reaching Whitehall, for Peel was writing in a cheerful vein from Dublin.

*Private.*

Dublin Castle,  
September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1812.

My dear Lord Liverpool,

I assure you that we fully participate in your joy at all the good news which you have sent us from the Peninsula, and I think we may attribute to it in a great measure the extraordinary tranquillity of this country in every part of it. Even this state of quiet, however, does not satisfy the *very loyal*,<sup>1</sup> and I am told that some of them would prefer a little agitation to so dead a calm.

I have written privately to Lord Sidmouth on the subject of opening the distillation from grain. It is suspended by law until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December next, but the Lord Lieutenant has the power of opening it by proclamation on any day after the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, giving one month's notice. From the information which I have been able to collect the potato crop is more than usually abundant; and there is every probability that the corn harvest will produce more than an average supply, notwithstanding the present extraordinary price of corn in the markets.

We can little afford to lose the revenue which will be derived from distillation, and, as I have said to Lord Sidmouth, any objection to the renewal of distillation at the earliest period must arise from external causes, from the necessity of replacing a deficiency in the harvest of Great Britain, or of providing those means of subsistence for our armies in Spain of which the rupture with America<sup>2</sup> may have in part deprived them.

I should be most anxious to have your opinion and advice before anything is decided upon finally. The period is fast approaching when the Lord Lieutenant may exercise his power. In a conversation which I had with Mr. Marsden the other day, he calculated the revenue from the duty on spirits at nearly a million per annum.

The prospect of the Duke of Richmond's stay here gives me the greatest

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the Orange element.

<sup>2</sup> The United States had declared war on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

## FIRST YEARS AS PRIME MINISTER

possible satisfaction: indeed, if he left us, as Sir Charles Stanton is about shortly to resign his situation, a new Lord Lieutenant and Chief Under Secretary would find themselves, I fear, much embarrassed should any difficulties arise.

I am very anxious to do something with the press in Ireland, and I am not quite without hopes that we may put it on a better footing.

Pray give my kindest regards to Lady Liverpool, and assure her that I will keep my promise of writing to her.

I am, my dear Lord Liverpool,

Yours most affectionately,

Robert Peel.

PS. On looking over my letter I think I have much underrated the probable productiveness of the corn harvest.

Parliament was now about to be dissolved, but Liverpool no longer had it in his power to influence elections in the way in which his predecessors had done. This is made perfectly clear in a letter which he wrote to the Lord Chancellor's brother.

*Private and Confidential.*

Fife House,  
September 25th, 1812.

My dear Sir,

I have received the favour of your letter, and I can assure you I feel all the importance of having the King's Advocate in Parliament.

I should hope that this may be accomplished if he can assist himself to a certain degree. You will, perhaps, be surprised when I tell you that the Treasury have only one seat free of expense, for which our friend Vansittart will be elected. I have two more which personal friends have put at my disposal: and this is the sum total of my powers free of expense.

Mr. Curwen's bill<sup>1</sup> has put an end to all money transactions between Government and the supposed proprietors of boroughs. Our friends, therefore, who look for the assistance of Government must be ready to start for open boroughs, where the general influence of Government, combined with a reasonable expense on their own part, may afford them a fair chance of success. I should hope the King's Advocate would have no difficulty in agreeing to what has been proposed to him; in doing which he will have the same advantage as many of our official supporters who have been in Parliament for years.

I am, etc.,

Liverpool.

To Sir W. Scott.

<sup>1</sup> In 1809, Mr. Curwen, M.P. for Carlisle, carried a Bill to prevent the sale of seats in Parliament. Liverpool had supported it warmly in the Lords, but Perceval opposed it in the Commons. This was during the Portland administration.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

Polling took place during the month of October, and the result was eminently favourable to the government. Colchester wrote in his Diary on November 22nd, "The calculation of strength is computed at an increase of 60 on the side of the Administration, putting Lord Wellesley's and Canning's friends on the side of the Opposition; and an increase of 24 above the ministerial side, as returned upon the Duke of Portland's Parliament in 1807." Parliament met after the election, but was immediately adjourned until February of the following year.

By the end of 1812 it may thus be said that the ministry had surmounted all its earlier difficulties, and the situation both at home and abroad was far more encouraging than it had been in the summer. The Russian snows had done their work, and by the end of December the French army was back in Poland a mere shadow of its former self. Only in respect of the United States had matters taken a turn for the worse.

Liverpool knew far too much about strategy to wish to have two wars on his hands at the same time, and one of the first acts of his administration had been to cancel the restrictions on American trade. Unfortunately this step came too late, for five days earlier, namely on June 18th, the United States had declared war on Great Britain. The ensuing struggle lasted for two years, and proved an annoying distraction, if nothing much more, to Britain when she could ill afford to divert her energies from the continent of Europe.

For the next twelve months the attention of the whole country was concentrated on what was happening on the mainland beyond the sea, for the year 1813 saw the sun of France sink below the horizon. It was an unforgettable sunset, stormy and blood-red, but it was a sunset all the same. No longer was it only the Kings and governments who were against Napoleon, for now the peoples were rising too; France had to face a Europe animated by that spirit of nationality to which she had herself given birth. The Russians followed the remnants of the Grand Army across Poland, while Prussia changed sides, and the Hohenzollerns put themselves at the head of the German national movement. Austria, mindful of past experiences, remained neutral, but Sweden, although her Crown Prince was

now none other than the French Marshal Bernadotte, joined the Allies. Nevertheless, the tide did not turn at once, and at Lutzen and Bautzen the French Emperor defeated his enemies, but at Pleswitz he had to agree to an armistice, though this was in fact more necessary to the Allies than to him. Times were indeed changed.

Yet on the part of France herself there was no hesitation: she rallied to Napoleon in the hour of defeat even more fiercely than she had done in that of victory. The doubts and hesitations only came later. No people in the world more readily responds to vigorous and inspired leadership than the French, just as none is more subject to despair when deprived of it. Even as Frenchmen of all classes had responded to the call of Louis XIV in the dark days of the War of the Spanish Succession, so now they closed their ranks round Napoleon. Almost before the last soldier had quitted Russian soil the Senate authorized the call to the colours of another 350,000 conscripts. The genius of the Emperor still enthralled the mind of France, and the peasants without a murmur gave up their remaining sons in the same spirit as that of the men who sank down to die in the Russian snows with the words "*Vive L'Empereur*" still on their lips. There might be reluctance to serve in the Dutch and German departments of the Empire, and in royalist Brittany, but there was no slackening of effort or enthusiasm in France proper.

Everything now depended on Austria, and she, under the guidance of Metternich, was prudence personified. Napoleon may have deceived himself that because the Emperor Francis was his father-in-law he could count upon the Austrian monarch's support, but sentiment played no part in Metternich's public life. On June 17th, 1813, a fortnight after the armistice at Pleswitz, the rulers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia signed a treaty at Reichenbach by which Austria assumed the position of a mediator and promised to declare war on France if certain conditions of peace were refused. These were that the actual territory of that Power should be confined within the limits of the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the sea; that Napoleon should restore the Bourbons to their Spanish throne and should evacuate Holland; and that he should abandon his

position as head of the Confederation of the Rhine and should allow the Pope, whom he held in captivity in France, to return to Rome. On the other hand, Murat, whom Napoleon had placed on the throne of Naples, was to remain there, as was Jerome Bonaparte in Westphalia.

Metternich in person took these terms to Napoleon. "So you, too, want war," the Emperor exclaimed. "Well, you shall have it. I have annihilated the Prussian army at Lützen; I have beaten the Russians at Bautzen: now you wish your turn to come. Be it so; we shall meet in Vienna." After all, the French troops were still, save in Spain, invincible, and Napoleon was himself unbeaten in the field. He made the most of that very powerful argument, the terror of his name: he spoke of peace as if it were dishonour, and of negotiation as if it were degrading. The truth was that even at this late hour he must dictate or go. "Your sovereigns," he told Metternich in a moment of frankness, "born to the throne, may be beaten twenty times, and still go back to their palaces; that cannot I—the child of fortune; my reign will not outlast the day when I have ceased to be strong, and therefore to be feared." Metternich was equally outspoken. "In all that your Majesty has just said to me, I see a proof that Europe and your Majesty cannot come to an understanding. Your peace is no more than a truce. Misfortune, like success, hurries you to war. The moment has arrived when you and Europe will exchange challenges; you will pick up the gauntlet, and Europe as well; and it will not be Europe that will be defeated."

Seeing that arguments were of no avail, Napoleon fell back on threats. "You are no soldier," he shouted at the Austrian Chancellor, "and you do not know what goes on in the mind of a soldier. I was brought up in the field, and a man such as I am does not concern himself much about the lives of a million of men." At this Napoleon threw his hat into the corner of the room, where Metternich let it lie. Finally the Corsican rejected the offer with the outburst, "It may cost me my throne, but I will bury the world beneath its ruins."<sup>1</sup> As the Austrian Chancellor got into his carriage, he murmured to Berthier, "*C'est un homme perdu.*" He saw Napoleon once again, but it was

<sup>1</sup> Cecil, A., *Metternich*, pp. 90-4.

useless, and on the night of August 10th the Austrian forces began to pour through the passes of the Riesengebirge.

Two months later occurred the slaughter of Leipsic, when the French military power met with overwhelming disaster. Then was seen the folly of the great dispersal of force consequent upon Napoleon's attempt to hold down the whole Continent, for he was determined to carry on the war from the Tagus to the Vistula, to support Joseph in Spain, and to keep his garrisons in every fortress as far east as Dantzic; as a result, when he most wanted troops he was unable to concentrate them. The battle of Leipsic was the signal for Germany to revolt, and everywhere the French detachments and garrisons were cut off. The Dutch, too, rose in rebellion, and the Prince of Orange returned to his own country, to which was also sent a British force which reduced the few fortresses that the patriots were unable to take. In Italy insurrection broke out, and British troops from Sicily were landed at Genoa to encourage the insurgents, while an Austrian army entered the country from the north, and won a decisive victory at Valsarno. Meanwhile, far away to the south, the French had been driven back across the Pyrenees, and by the end of the year Wellington was on the soil of France. The day of victory for which Britain had waited for twenty-one years was at last in sight.

In these circumstances it was only natural that both at Westminster and in the country eyes should be directed outward rather than inward, and the Parliamentary session of 1813 was exceptionally tranquil. This did not, however, mean that Liverpool was without his anxieties, and foremost among them was a renewed quarrel between the Prince and Princess of Wales.

Ever since the events of 1807 the Princess had resided quietly at Kensington Palace, and had seen her daughter, Charlotte, once a week; but all her life she was the worst possible judge of character, so that when some members of the Opposition decided that she would be a useful stick with which to belabour the Regent and the administration, she was as wax in their hands. The Whigs could never forgive the Prince for having thrown in his lot with their opponents, but while Grenville and Grey adopted an attitude of relatively lofty disdain, the lesser



fry, such as Brougham and Whitbread, were extremely resentful of the fact that they were out of office. They were not an attractive pair. For Whitbread "no means, however trivial and unscrupulous, were to be neglected by which a party triumph might be achieved. The character of his mind is shown by his remark to someone who told him that the Prince was ill with bladder trouble: 'God make him worse.'"<sup>1</sup>

Brougham was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable men of the nineteenth century, and certainly one of the most extraordinary who ever became Lord Chancellor. The astounding range of his gifts was catalogued with pride by his friends, and with despair by his enemies; had he only known a little law, said a contemporary, he would have known a little of everything. Even Macaulay, who was seldom generous to a competitor until he was dead, had to admit that Brougham did one thing well, before going on to proclaim that he did two or three things indifferently and a hundred detestably. Creevey dismissed him as a "mass of insincere jaw."

A modern writer has said that Brougham's manifold interests "would indeed have gone for little in an age that worshipped eloquence, had they not been adorned by excellence of speech; but Brougham's rhetoric was by common consent sublime, and his invective like a tornado that bears down everything in its path. It was said that he vowed not to open his mouth for a month after he entered Parliament—the spiteful Creevey declared that once the month was up he never shut it again—but Brougham's effortless mastery of speech was seldom equalled and hardly surpassed even by Plunket in that last wonderful decade of the unreformed House of Commons, when oratory, in Russell's opinion, rose to a height of art it had never touched before and has never since attained."<sup>2</sup> With all his genius, however, there was one defect, and that one was fatal. His colleagues could not trust him. He could not stand by his friends. He could not keep a secret. He could not be depended on to tell the truth. So in due course there came a time when his colleagues, even while they recognized that his abilities were far greater than their own, would not have him at any

<sup>1</sup> Fulford, R., *George the Fourth*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Tilby, A. Wyatt, *Lord John Russell*, p. 14.

price. No man in British politics has risen to such a height as Brougham only to fall so fast and so far.

In the summer of 1812 the Princess of Wales had come under the influence of Brougham and Whitbread, and while they were inflaming her against her husband he himself added fuel to the fire by reducing her visits to her daughter by a half. The Princess at once protested, and applied to the Queen to be allowed to visit Charlotte more often. The Queen passed the letter to the Regent, who refused to alter his decision. The Princess then wrote to her husband direct, but he returned the letter to her unopened. Her next step was to forward it at the same time to Liverpool and to the *Morning Chronicle*, in which paper it duly appeared on February 10th, 1813, to the delight of the vulgar and the detriment of the monarchy. On this the Regent summoned a meeting of the Privy Council, which in due course decided that he was justified in continuing to regulate the visits of his wife to their daughter. The Princess, after this reverse, returned to her life of retirement, and spent her time making wax figures of her husband, embellished with horns, which she then stabbed with pins and left to melt in front of the fire.

If Caroline did not succeed in her objective, her Whig advisers were by no means wholly unsuccessful in theirs, for, although attempts to raise the matter in Parliament proved a failure, a good deal of the mud thrown at the Regent stuck. In particular the Common Council of the City of London, which had by a majority of only six decided to erect a monument to Pitt, proceeded to give further proof of its irresponsibility by voting an address to the Princess. She gladly received the deputation at Kensington Palace, and a part of the procession took occasion to pass along Pall Mall for the purpose of demonstrating against the Regent outside Carlton House. This deliberate denigration of the Prince was the cause of serious embarrassment to the government, which was, of course, exactly what the Opposition intended.

On the other hand, the progress of the war on all fronts was enough to satisfy even the most optimistic, and that Liverpool followed it with enthusiasm and insight is proved by the following letter of congratulation to Wellington on his invasion of France:

LORD LIVERPOOL

*Private.*

London,  
October 20th, 1813.

My dear Lord,

I congratulate you most sincerely on your late successes: whatever may be the result of these operations, the establishment of the British army in France, after the expulsion of the French armies from Spain, will be a proud event in our military history, and forms a new epoch in the transactions of this most extraordinary war.

We received last night letters from the headquarters of the allied armies of the 29th of September. They bring the important intelligence of an arrangement having been concluded between the Austrians and Bavarians, by which the latter are to take part in the war against France. If this arrangement shall really be carried into effect (and there can be no doubt of it, if some unforeseen misfortune does not happen to the allied forces), it will probably secure the deliverance of Germany, and probably of a large part of Italy. The situation of Buonaparte at Dresden is most critical, and the fate of his army might be considered as certain if there was *one head* that directed the operations of the allies, and that a *head* in which all had confidence.

In amount of force, in quality of force, in zeal and spirit, military and national, the allies are greatly superior. Buonaparte's advantage consists in a simple command, opposed to a divided command. With this advantage, however, on his side, I think we need not now be apprehensive of the result; but the difference will, nevertheless, be great between his retiring to the Rhine with his present force nearly entire, or that force being completely defeated in its present position. I reckon not a little on his obstinacy in endeavouring to maintain that position longer than prudence would warrant. By a return which I have seen, the French armies have lost in the field and by sickness not less than 150,000 men since the commencement of hostilities. The French force now in Germany may amount to about 200,000 men.

Parliament meets on the 4th of November. We intend to raise as much money as we can before Christmas, and likewise to adopt the measures which may be judged, upon the whole, most advisable for keeping up our army to its present amount. Nothing is yet finally decided on this point. The subject is under consideration. When these measures are passed, together with the usual annual votes, we had some idea of adjourning till the month of March; but of this intention we think it most prudent to say nothing at present.

I was happy to hear from March so good an account of your health.

Believe me to be, with sincere regards,

Yours very faithfully,

Liverpool.

On the day before this sagacious and penetrating analysis of the military and political situation was written, the battle of Leipsic had come to an end and the terms of peace became the burning problem of the hour.

When Parliament met, Liverpool lost no time in indicating the lines upon which he and his colleagues were determined to act, and he proved himself the true disciple of Pitt. He declared that he should look upon it as a national dishonour "to depart from political justice and moderation; from justice not only to our friends but also to our enemies"; and he expressed the conviction that in exact proportion "as we were more vigorous, it became us to be more moderate." In view of the peculiar conditions obtaining on the Continent it was decided to send the Foreign Secretary to represent the country at the councils of the Allies, and so, on December 31st, 1813, Castlereagh, "in a pair of red breeches and jockey boots," set out from Harwich for the Allied Headquarters at Bâle. His only ministerial colleague was Frederick Robinson, subsequently Lord Goderich, and at this time Treasurer to the Navy. The staff consisted of Joseph Planta, the experienced Civil Servant who had been Canning's private secretary, and two Foreign Office clerks. Lady Castlereagh accompanied the party as far as The Hague.

## CHAPTER VI

### PEACE-MAKING

1814-1815

LIVERPOOL was not one of those Prime Ministers who treat their principal colleagues as Under-Secretaries, and he never evinced the least desire to attract the limelight to himself. His personal experience had given him a good working knowledge of the most important Departments, and this was always at the disposal of the other ministers, but he knew very well the difference between advice and interference. He conceived the main duty of his office to be the task of getting the best out of his team, rather than the occupation of the centre of the stage himself, a course for which he was in any case temperamentally unfitted. Sir Harold Nicolson has inferred from this that "Lord Liverpool was not particularly interested in foreign policy except in so far as it might affect votes,"<sup>1</sup> but this interpretation of his attitude can hardly be maintained after an examination of his correspondence with Castlereagh and Wellington: Liverpool was deeply interested in foreign policy, but he left its execution to the Foreign Secretary. So Castlereagh went abroad with the widest powers yet given to a British statesman in similar circumstances, for they were "to negotiate and conclude of his own authority and without further consultation with the government, all conventions or treaties, either for the prosecution of war or for the restoration of peace." A comparison between his position and that of Bolingbroke a century before, or of that of the British representatives at Paris a little more than a century later, is eloquent of its strength.

There were few precedents for a Secretary of State leaving

<sup>1</sup> *The Congress of Vienna*, p. 65.

the country, but it was high time that Castlereagh should visit the Continent, for, as Aberdeen wrote, "The enemy is, in my view, a source of danger much less to be dreaded than what arises among ourselves." The fact was that the three leading Continental Powers in arms against France were by no means agreed as to the policy to be adopted towards that country now that victory seemed assured. The Tsar had been converted from a humble disciple and admirer of Napoleon into an inveterate foe, but he equally had no love for the Bourbons, since Louis XVIII had never made any great secret of his belief that the Romanoffs were *parvenus*. Accordingly, Alexander was inclined to favour the elevation of Bernadotte to the French throne as the best solution after the overthrow of Napoleon. Prussia, on the other hand, had two objects clearly in view, namely the reduction of France to the position of a second-rate Power, and the establishment of her own hegemony in Germany; for the rest, Berlin usually worked in close conjunction with St. Petersburg. Lastly, there was Austria, by which was to be understood Metternich. The object of the Austrian Chancellor was, then as always, to preserve a balance in Europe, and neither the somewhat nebulous fancies of the Tsar nor the frightfulness of the Prussians made any appeal to him. On the contrary, he was at first prepared to leave Napoleon in France as a check on Russia and Prussia, and he made several approaches to the French Emperor in this sense during the autumn of 1813, but without success.

Castlereagh had the good fortune not only to be firmly supported by the Prime Minister but also of knowing his own mind, and in both respects he was thus more happily placed than many of his predecessors and successors at the Foreign Office. His immediate purpose was to convert the loose and divided confederacy into a proper alliance with a definite policy and war aims, and at all costs to prevent the conclusion of a premature peace. In this task he had certain assets, and by no means the least of them was the experience which he had gained in handling the Irish borough-mongers. Then there were the British subsidies, without which the war would have come to a standstill; Wellington's victories in the Peninsula; and the possession of a number of French colonies which had

been captured during the war. Castlereagh made full use of all these advantages, and he made himself so much liked by his Austrian colleague that Metternich was soon declaring that "Castlereagh behaves like an angel." All this, however, might have been of no avail had it not suddenly become apparent that the bear, whose skin was being divided, was still very much alive.

Never had Napoleon shown such consummate generalship as during these months, although he was severely handicapped by the absence of the large forces which he had foolishly allowed to be locked up far from the main theatre of war. No fewer than 150,000 of his veterans were distributed in such remote garrisons as Hamburg, Magdeburg, Stettin, and Dantzic. These fortresses were for the most part blockaded by local militia, so that their retention did not withdraw any considerable number of troops from the Allied armies, while they fatally weakened the resources of France. Blücher, however, made a series of mistakes which played straight into his adversary's hands. On entering France he divided his forces, and Napoleon cut up the Prussian divisions one after another. There were French victories in January and February 1814, in rapid succession at Brienne, Champaubert, Montmirail, and Vauchamps; then Napoleon cut a Russian force to pieces at Nangis and an Austrian one at Montereau. The effect of these disasters was far-reaching. The Prussian army was practically destroyed; the Austrians asked for an armistice; and proposals were made for the evacuation of France.

One man kept his head, and that man was Castlereagh. Unlike many of his successors on official visits abroad, he was not, as we have seen, attended by any pomp and circumstance. He settled down in Chaumont, and when Napoleon's victories threatened to disrupt the coalition, he took prompt action. He insisted that two corps should be detached from Bernadotte's army and sent to reinforce Blücher, and he persuaded the Tsar to set his face against any evacuation of French territory. These measures served to stem the tide, while Napoleon's successes actually strengthened Castlereagh's position, for they encouraged the Emperor to demand terms which the Allies could not possibly grant, while they served to prove to his foes that all danger from him was by no means at an end. On both

scores, therefore, Castlereagh found that his task of creating a united front had been rendered easier by the course which the war had taken.

At home Liverpool was beginning to contemplate the thorny problem of the future government of France. Soon after his invasion of that country Wellington had formed the opinion that the best solution would be the restoration of the Bourbons, and towards the close of the previous year he had on his own responsibility allowed the Comte de Grammont, who was serving in his army, to go to London as an emissary from the royalist party in France. About the same time the Comte d'Artois had an interview with Liverpool, and as a result of this the Prime Minister circulated the following memorandum to his colleagues:

*Most Secret.*

*January 4th, 1814.*

I have this morning seen his Royal Highness Monsieur, who returned from Hartwell yesterday, after a communication with his brother, Louis XVIII, and his two sons, the Duc d'Angoulême and Duc de Berri, on the subject of the memorandum delivered by Lord Wellington to the Comte de Grammont, for the purpose of being shown to Louis XVIII.

[Then follows a long paragraph in which Liverpool recounts his endeavours to convince the Comte d'Artois that there was no reason to suppose that Austria would make a separate peace.]

Monsieur then entered upon the subject on which we had met. He said that he had had a full conversation with his brother and two sons in consequence of Lord Wellington's memorandum and the Comte de Grammont's mission; that all that had passed, however, on this subject was confined to themselves, and had not been made known to any individual attached to them. He said that he considered Lord Wellington's memorandum as furnishing additional proof from the highest authority of that of which they had had indisputable evidence before, that the dispositions of the people of France were in favour of the re-establishment of the House of Bourbon, and that they desired only the appearance of a prince of that House to induce them to declare in his favour; that I was already apprised of his sentiments as to what they considered as their duty under present circumstances, previous to the arrival of the Comte de Grammont; and, that even if a doubt could have existed of what they owed to their own honour and to France, previous to this event, they could have now no hesitation in declaring that it was their indispensable duty to comply with the wishes which had been expressed from so many quarters, and to embark with as little delay as possible for some port of France.

That the arrangements which had been approved by Louis XVIII were



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as follows: That the Duc d'Angoulême and the Duc de Berri should embark on board a ship of war, or, in case that could not be granted, on board the packet-boat for Passages, and that, upon arriving there, they should put themselves in communication with Lord Wellington. That it was Monsieur's intention to embark on board a frigate, or, if that could not be granted, a vessel which he had the means of hiring, and to sail directly for the Garonne. That he knew there was a party in Bordeaux ready to support him, and that he had not the least doubt of being received and supported by them as soon as he landed in the neighbourhood. That if our engagements with our allies prevented our giving them that active assistance in this business which they were so desirous of obtaining, they limited their application to a demand for passports, for the Dukes of Angoulême and Berri, either under their own names or under fictitious names, to embark on board the packet-boat for Passages, and a licence for the ship in which Monsieur intended to go to Bordeaux.

As soon as Monsieur had concluded, I began by reminding him that when I last saw him, which was only two hours after the copy of the memorandum from Lord Wellington had been put into my hands, I had explicitly stated to him my personal opinion that the British Government could not, under present circumstances, further or assist the proposition which I was aware would be grounded on that memorandum. That we were so circumstanced with respect to our allies, that we would not be justified in taking such a step without their previous consent, or without such manifestation of public opinion by an actual rising in France as might warrant us, from what we knew previously of their sentiments and opinions, in acting without the delay which would unavoidably arise from a reference to them. That I could now state it as the opinion of my colleagues (in which I included that of Lord Castlereagh, for I had received his opinion in writing), that neither our engagements nor our honour would permit our adopting at this moment the proposal which he had made. That the connexion which subsisted between us and our allies necessarily required previous communication with them on a measure of such importance, but that this communication was rendered still more indispensable from the negotiations to which we were jointly parties.

That if he asked my opinion as to the result of those negotiations, I did not believe they would end in peace. That the allies would certainly not have made peace at Frankfort upon the same terms as they would have made it at Prague; nor would they, in my judgment, make it at Besançon or Dijon upon the same terms as they would have concluded it at Frankfort; but that, as they had admitted the principle of treating with Buonaparte, it was in his power to have peace by accepting their conditions, though, from what we knew of his character, the acceptance of them was very improbable. That, whilst we could not agree to the measure he proposed without previous communication with our allies, we were ready to communicate without delay all that had passed on this subject to them, for their consideration; to desire their favorable attention to it in the event of the

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negotiation being either broken off, or any disposition appearing on the part of Buonaparte to evade peace on the only admissible principles. That we should be ready to concert with them upon the measures which it might be proper to adopt with a view to the interior of France; and that Louis XVIII and Monsieur should be fully informed of the result of this communication.

That all therefore that we now suggested was a short delay till we could receive an answer from Lord Castlereagh. That this delay appeared to me to be likely even to be advantageous to him; it would enable Lord Wellington to procure further information; and they must be aware that much might be done by Lord Wellington in the present state of things, both towards learning and trying the opinion of the country, which he might be obliged to give up altogether, if a French prince should once arrive against the declared opinion of the Government. That I conjured him not to put us under the painful necessity of giving an instruction to Lord Wellington to abstain from any communication with them in the event of their arrival in France; an instruction which it would be most distressing to us to be obliged to send and which might in its results produce the most unfavourable impression upon their own cause. I added that, having formed this opinion after mature deliberation, I was sure he would see how impossible it was for us to assist indirectly and covertly a project which we felt it our duty to oppose till the sentiments of our allies had been obtained, and that we felt, therefore, the same painful necessity in rejecting his second proposition as we had done in rejecting the first.

Monsieur thanked me for the frankness with which I had explained myself. He said it was most painful for his brother and for him to differ on such a subject with a Government to whom they owed so many obligations, and to which they were bound by so many ties. That we were certainly the best judges of what our honour or our engagements to our allies required, but that their honour was likewise concerned in this business, and that they should not feel that they were justified either to themselves or to their country if, after such an intimation of the wishes of the French people, they did not immediately repair to the place where their duty obliged them to go. That all they therefore asked was their passports and their licence, under real or fictitious names; that we might certainly give what instructions we pleased to Lord Wellington, and if those instructions prohibited him from communicating with them they would certainly abstain from such communication, and try their fortunes in other ways; but that, whatever were the consequences, they should in that case feel they had done their duty. He further added that in going to France, however improbable might be the chance of peace at this time, and he certainly thought so after what I had said, they were fully sensible that circumstances might arise in which it might be concluded with Buonaparte; and that they should think themselves most unjustifiable in going to France for the purpose of exciting the people to rise in their favour, unless they had entirely made up their minds, even in the event of a peace, not to abandon them, but to share the fortunes of those who declared in their favour, whatever they might be.

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I again urged the advantage of delay: that, though we differed now, events might arise, and very shortly, which might lead us entirely to agree; that even the public declaration of such a town as Bordeaux in favour of the royal cause would in a great degree alter the question; and that, whatever might be the policy of our Government in such an event, which must depend upon circumstances, it might remove any objection to his going in person, as in that case he would not appear to go by our sanction to excite the people to rise against the Government, but he would go to those who had taken the measure upon their own responsibility, and who were desirous of having him amongst them.

To this he replied that it was the universal opinion of all with whom they had communicated, that there never would be an actual rising in France till a prince actually arrived, and that it would take place as soon as he was known to be upon French territory.

At the conclusion of our conversation he asked me whether they should receive the passports and licence for which they applied. I answered I did not think the Government, with the view which they had taken on the subject, would be justified in giving them; that they would certainly impose no personal indignity upon them, but they would not be justified in giving facilities until such time as the communication with the allies had taken place.

He then at first intimated, and afterwards plainly stated, that in that case his sons would go to Falmouth to embark on board the packet for Passages. That they were aware they could not embark without a passport, but, upon being refused permission to embark, it would be necessary for the King and them to publish to the whole world the actual state of the case, and to make it known to France, and to Europe, that it was not their fault that they were not actually in France, but that they were prevented from going by the act of the British Government.

Monsieur said this without anything like the appearance of menace; and indeed I must do him the justice to say that his manner throughout, though earnest, and on some occasions very affecting, was such as I have universally experienced from him,<sup>1</sup> and that he was as candid as I could have expected any individual could be with the strong feelings which he possessed on the subject of our conversation.

This memorandum was discussed by the Cabinet on the following day, and after it had met, Liverpool wrote to the Comte d'Artois that "they considered themselves precluded in the present state of things from acceding to his demands without previous communication with the rest of their allies."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the opinion of Leopold I of the Belgians: "He was blinded by certain absolute ideas, but a good man, and deserving to be loved. . . . An honest man, a kind friend, an honourable master, sincere in his opinions, and inclined to do everything that is right." *Letters of Queen Victoria, First Series*, vol. I, pp. 52-3.

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Both men were right from their respective points of view, and the Bourbon prince must have seen pretty clearly that the British Prime Minister wanted to have his hand forced, and this events soon proceeded to do. In the meantime, as has been shown, the Tsar and the Austrian Emperor were too occupied in defending themselves against Napoleon to have time to think about deposing him, so the Comte d'Artois slipped across into Holland in an ordinary vessel, while the Ducs d'Angoulême and de Berri managed to get to Spain and Jersey respectively. The Bourbons were certainly not restored by the Allies.<sup>1</sup>

There was another royal personage whose activities on the Continent were at this time being regarded by Liverpool somewhat anxiously, and that was the Duke of Clarence. He had crossed to the Low Countries when they rose against the French, and he was present with the British forces under Sir Thomas Graham<sup>2</sup> at the attack on Antwerp, which was defended by Carnot. From there he wrote to Liverpool:

British Head-Quarters,  
*February 6th, 1814.*

My dear Lord,

I was so suddenly called away by Sir Thomas Graham that it was not in my power at the time to inform your Lordship. I must ever regret the fleet was not burnt; but at the same time the ships, without the greatest repairs, will never be able to put to sea. Two entire days and part of a third were dedicated to the most perfect and unmolested practice of our artillery against the ships and buildings. We ought to have been crowned with success, for every exertion was made, and all ranks tried who could most do their duty; our loss, thank God, has been but small; and Sir Thomas Graham did all in his power, and was well seconded by those under him.

Being, therefore, perfectly satisfied with the Commander-in-Chief and his gallant officers and men, I remain with the British army on the march, and shall continue with them at least four-and-twenty hours after they are in their permanent quarters. Before I return to the Hague I shall pay a visit to the Duke of Saxe Weimar, if he is at Breda. I shall, however, write as circumstances arise, and, if anything should prevent my returning to the Hague directly, you shall hear from me; but I am determined to proceed to those places only where my reception is secure and proper.

Adieu, and ever believe me, my dear Lord,

Yours sincerely,

William.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. de la Gorce, P., *La Restauration: Louis XVIII.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Later Lord Lynedoch.

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Liverpool, however, by *no means* agreed with Clarence's proposals. He had crossed to Holland without consulting anyone, and in the light of the existing political and military situation there were serious objections to a British prince wandering about the Continent at his pleasure; furthermore, the future William IV was at no time a model of discretion. Liverpool, therefore, pointed out to the Regent the advisability of summoning his brother back to England, and this was accordingly done.

While these events were taking place, Napoleon, in consequence of his series of victories, had refused the terms offered him at the Congress of Châtillon, and on March 1st there was concluded under pressure from Castlereagh the Treaty of Chaumont, which was destined to keep the Allies together until after the fall of Napoleon, and to form the basis of the final settlement at Vienna. By this agreement, Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia concluded an offensive and defensive alliance which had as its object the confinement of France to her old boundaries. Each member of the alliance was pledged to maintain 150,000 men in the field, while Great Britain promised, in addition to paying for her own contingent and maintaining her navy, to provide an annual subsidy of five million pounds to be divided equally between the other three contracting parties. On the conclusion of peace each of the three Powers was to furnish a contingent of 60,000 men if any one of them was attacked. As for the settlement of Europe, it was to be effected upon these bases: the German Empire was to be restored as a federal union; Holland and Belgium were to be united into a monarchy under the House of Orange; the Bourbons were to be restored in Spain; Italy was again to be divided into independent states; and the neutrality of Switzerland was to be guaranteed by all the Great Powers. This agreement was a notable triumph for Castlereagh, who was fully justified in referring to it as "my treaty," and it had the immediate effect of concentrating the whole attention of the Allies upon their main objective, namely the overthrow of Napoleon.

As usual, Liverpool took the greatest pains to keep Wellington fully informed of what was taking place, and the two were

now on such intimate terms that he made no secret of his own troubles. On February 9th, for instance, he wrote:

The extreme imprudence of the French princes renders any secret communication with them very hazardous. Could you have believed it possible that, when the Prince Regent visited the Comte d'Artois, a few days before his departure for Switzerland, in consequence of his being confined by the gout, and chose to say civil things about his present prospects and the re-establishment of his brother on the throne of France, that the whole of what was said by the Prince upon that occasion was published verbatim in one of the morning papers a few days after?

Six weeks later the situation had changed considerably, and even those at the centre were clearly surprised at the rapid progress of events, though Liverpool was fully justified in his claim that he had made provision for what was taking place. He was writing to Wellington.

Fife House,

March 24th, 1814.

My dear Lord,

I am much obliged to you for your letter, which I received a few days ago by Major Freemantle. We have since received your letter of the 14th with the important intelligence of the occupation of Bordeaux by a division of your army under Marshal Beresford, and of the declaration of the civil authorities of that city in favour of the House of Bourbon.

I shall direct a copy of the instructions which have been sent in consequence to Lord Castlereagh to be forwarded to you.

The case which has arisen has been foreseen from the beginning as possible; and, as far as was practicable, provision has been made for it.

At a meeting of the ministers of the allied sovereigns at Langres, on the 29th of January, when they settled the principles on which they were ready to negotiate with Buonaparte, Lord Castlereagh declared, that though he was ready to negotiate and conclude peace with Buonaparte on the part of his Government as the sovereign *de facto* of France, yet, if anything should occur in the course of the negotiations to call his power in question, he reserved to himself the right of suspending the negotiations, or of adopting such course as, according to circumstances, might then be expedient.

That the declaration of the second or third city in France, as Bordeaux may be said to be, in favour of the Bourbons, combined with the account you have given us of a similar sentiment pervading the adjoining country, does in a *degree* call Buonaparte's power in question, cannot be denied. The question altogether is one of *degree*. Every effort of this nature must have a beginning; a more promising one could not have been expected, and it remains to be seen to what extent it spreads.

Whilst we are determined, however, under present circumstances to

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keep off the conclusion of any treaty of peace with Buonaparte, we must endeavour to manage our allies. Our decision may at first alarm them. I entertain confident expectations that they will be reconciled to it, if the preliminaries shall not actually have been signed before they receive the communications of yesterday. If the preliminaries shall have been signed upon our own terms, the business will be more difficult; and their decision will very probably then depend upon the *degree* in which the spirit which has manifested itself at Bordeaux extends itself. At all events much will be done by gaining time; and I am sure you will see the importance of furnishing us with the most early information on the following points: First, on the progress of the Royalist spirit throughout the south and other parts of France within your observation or cognisance. Secondly, the resources which the country can afford for the support and furtherance of that cause. Thirdly, what would be the prospect of ultimate success if the other allied Powers were to withdraw from the contest, either by making a separate peace, or by retiring with their armies to the frontier, and Great Britain should be left to carry it on, unsupported by any Power except the nations of the Peninsula and the Royalists themselves. The last alternative is one which must be most seriously considered.

If the Austrians were determined either on withdrawing from the interior of France, or on making their separate peace, the Russians and Prussians would never attempt to preserve their present station; and we should then have to decide whether we would make peace jointly with the allies, or continue the war in France, under such circumstances, in support of the Royalist cause.

I have not the least apprehension of the Emperor of Austria being actuated by any tenderness towards Buonaparte: on account of the connexion with his daughter. I can even say that, in my judgment, he has been disposed to act more fairly about the Bourbons than either of the other great military Powers. But the Austrians of all descriptions, military and political, dread the power of France, and with resources far more considerable, and a better organized military system, than either Russia or Prussia, they want the spirit of enterprise and self-confidence which belongs in a very considerable degree to both the other Powers.

We shall wait with the most anxious solicitude for the next intelligence from you; and we must only now hope (as so considerable a portion of territory and population has already committed itself against Buonaparte) that the flame will extend itself so widely, as to leave no doubt of the insufficiency of Buonaparte to answer for the French nation.

I have thus communicated to you freely my sentiments on the present most singular and important crisis. I have no apprehension of any difficulties in Parliament at present, whatever may exist hereafter, if the line of policy adopted by the Government should prove successful.

Believe me to be, with great truth, my dear Lord,

Very sincerely yours,

Liverpool.

In reality the situation was a great deal more hopeful, and the end was a great deal nearer, than Liverpool imagined, for the results of the Treaty of Chaumont soon made themselves apparent. Napoleon attempted one last stroke at the Allies' communications, but it failed to stop the advance of his enemies upon Paris, and on March 30th the capital surrendered. Thereafter events moved rapidly. Napoleon himself was ready to continue the struggle, but his Marshals were not, and still less were, by this time, the French people. Then was seen the truth of the remark made by the Emperor to Metternich during their interview the previous summer. All the proposals for a Bernadotte dynasty, or for a regency on behalf of the infant King of Rome, were proved to have no basis in reality. Under the guidance of Talleyrand the French sought salvation in the return of their old Royal Family, and on April 6th the Senate "called to the throne the head of the House of Bourbon," while at Fontainebleau the fallen Emperor signed his abdication. On the 28th Napoleon sailed from Fréjus for Elba, and on May 3rd, preceded by a few vague promises, Louis XVIII of France and Navarre entered, amid the cheers of the crowd, the capital which had sent his brother to the guillotine.

The conclusion of hostilities may have eased Liverpool's burden in one direction, but it soon proved to have added to it in others. The actual settlement, first with Napoleon and then with France, providing for her return to the boundaries of 1792, proved surprisingly easy, mainly owing to the ability of Castlereagh: by the second of these agreements it was laid down that "All the Powers engaged on either side in the present war shall, within the space of two months, send plenipotentiaries to Vienna for the purpose of regulating in General Congress the arrangements which are to complete the provision of the present treaty." At the same time a preliminary private arrangement was made between the Allies themselves dealing with the territorial settlement on the left bank of the Rhine and in the north of Italy. The principal credit for this procedure must, of course, go to Castlereagh in view of the very full powers with which he had been entrusted, but some of it must reflect upon the Prime Minister and the administration which gave him these powers. In any event the realism displayed in



the steps leading up to the Congress of Vienna is in marked contrast with the diplomatic chaos which marked the close of the two great wars of the following century. The ground had been well prepared, and cleared of many obstacles, before the Congress actually met, which in the upshot was not until September; plenty of time was thus given for tempers to cool.

For Liverpool the interval was to be no period of repose. The return of Louis XVIII to his own country had been marked by a series of elaborate festivities, and the Regent had accompanied the King of France as far as Dover. In these circumstances it seemed to Castlereagh that it would be courteous to ask the Tsar, the Austrian Emperor, and the King of Prussia to visit England before they returned to their respective capitals. Moreover, such a visit could hardly be considered in any other light than as a tribute to the pre-eminence of Britain, and he hoped that it might not be without influence on the political questions which were on the agenda for the Congress of Vienna. Both Liverpool and the Regent agreed with the suggestion, and the invitations were duly issued. They were eagerly accepted by Alexander and Frederick William, but Francis was compelled to decline as his presence was, he felt, required in Austria. The two other monarchs accordingly crossed the Channel on June 6th escorted by a squadron under the command of the Duke of Clarence.

The immediate result of this visit was a renewal of the quarrel between the Prince and Princess of Wales. The Queen gave notice of her intention to hold drawing-rooms for the distinguished visitors, whereupon her son notified his mother formally that "while he considered that his own presence at her Court could not be dispensed with," it was nevertheless his fixed determination to meet the Princess of Wales neither there nor elsewhere, "upon any occasion, either in public or private." To this decision the Princess was compelled to give way, but when her husband took his guests to a gala performance at the Opera she made a point of being present on the same evening, and was greeted with great applause, while the Regent was on many occasions greeted with cries of "Prinny, where's your wife?" At the Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's on July 7th

no place was reserved for Caroline. On the other hand the situation was anything but satisfactory from the point of view of the Regent, who was received with hoots and jeers whenever he appeared in public. "He had arranged everything so carefully as a flattering setting for himself—the spectacular host to a group of admiring foreigners. But the result was a ghastly travesty of what he had intended, for he found all he had done was to make his guests eye-witnesses of the detestation in which he was held by his own country."<sup>1</sup>

Brougham, Tierney, and Whitbread made what Whig capital they could out of these unedifying spectacles, but Caroline was by now under no illusions about them or their motives. "You see, my dear," she once remarked to a friend, "how I am plagued; it is not the loss of the amusement which I regret, but being treated like a child, and made the puppet of a party: what signify if I am applauded in his hearing or not—that is all for the gratification of *the party*, not for *my* gratification; 'tis of no consequence to the Princess, but to Mr. Whitbread—and that's the way things always go, and always will, till I can leave this vile country."

In some such mood she wrote to Liverpool:

Monday, *July 25th*, 1814.

The Princess of Wales requests Lord Liverpool to lay before his Royal Highness the Prince Regent the contents of this letter without delay.

Impelled by the motive of restoring tranquillity to the Prince Regent, and of ensuring to herself that peace of mind of which she has so long been bereft, the Princess of Wales, after very mature reflection, has resolved to take such measures as may enable her to go abroad; a resolution which cannot appear strange to the ministers of the Prince Regent, after the Princess's unmerited sufferings of nineteen years, and the recent aggravated indignities which have prevented the Princess even from seeing the nearest relatives and dearest friends of her beloved father, the Duke of Brunswick.

The Princess of Wales wishes her former line of conduct to be clearly understood, that, in appealing to the feelings of a generous nation, the only protector which remained to her since the lamented indisposition of his Majesty, the Princess has ever acted solely on the principle of self-defence, and in vindication of that honour which is dearer to her than life.

The Princess of Wales would perhaps have postponed her intended departure till the marriage of the Princess Charlotte had taken place, had

<sup>1</sup> Creston, Dormer, *The Regent and His Daughter*, p. 209.

she not been informed that the unprotected state of the Princess of Wales, in these peculiar circumstances in which the Princess Charlotte must have left her mother, formed the chief impediment to the union with the Prince Hereditary of Orange. It is the sincere wish of the Princess of Wales to remove every obstacle to the welfare of her daughter, and to the tranquillity and peace of mind of the Prince Regent, which induces the Princess of Wales to request that Lord Liverpool will lose no time in communicating to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent her wishes, and her intention to go to her native country, to pay a visit to her brother, the Duke of Brunswick.

The Princess of Wales has also to apprise Lord Liverpool of the following circumstances, to be laid before his Royal Highness the Prince Regent. The Princess is desirous to resign the Rangership of Greenwich Park, the late Duchess of Brunswick's house, and also the adjoining house, in which the Princess of Wales has resided for several years (namely, Montague House), in favour of the Princess Charlotte; and she trusts that this request will be graciously granted, as the Princess of Wales considers it as the last favour she shall have to demand of the Prince Regent.

The Princess of Wales takes this opportunity of explaining that her motive for declining a portion of the liberal and munificent grant voted by the House of Commons<sup>1</sup> was not any want of a due sense of gratitude to the House of Commons or to the Crown, but that she thought the acceptance of the whole sum would have imposed upon her the duty of maintaining a state which would have been incompatible with the intention which she now communicates to Lord Liverpool; but she thought she could not at that time mention this intention without giving rise to new discussions, or incurring the imputation of wishing to excite them. For the same reason she has deferred this communication till near the rise of Parliament, and till she herself is on the eve of quitting town for Worthing, where, if she should obtain the Prince Regent's gracious permission, it would be her wish to embark, without returning to town again.

The Princess of Wales feels proud to assure Lord Liverpool that her most fervent prayers will be offered up to the Omnipotent for the prosperity, glory, and blessing of this great nation.

The Regent was probably never more sincere in his life than when, in reply, he instructed Liverpool to assure the Princess that "he did not wish to throw any impediment in the way" of what she proposed to do, though he declined to confer on their daughter the Rangership of Greenwich Park. A man-of-war was ordered to be provided for her; and with respect to the omission of the foreign monarchs to visit her, and the rupture of Charlotte's engagement to the Prince of Orange,

<sup>1</sup> She had, to her credit, asked for it to be reduced from £50,000 to £35,000.

Liverpool "was commanded to say that, from the course of the transaction itself, the Prince Regent could not consider the peculiar circumstances of her Royal Highness as having formed the obstacle to that marriage. Upon the other point he was commanded to acquaint her Royal Highness that no obstruction was placed by the Prince Regent in the way of the allied sovereigns or the other illustrious personages visiting her Royal Highness before they left England."

Happy as her husband might be to see Caroline out of the country, her Whig advisers were none too pleased at the prospect of losing so valuable a weapon against their political opponents, and they tried to cause as much trouble as possible before she went abroad. Fortunately, she had a great deal more reliable and experienced a friend in Canning, and it was to him that she now turned.

Sompting, Sussex,

Wednesday, *August 3rd*, 1814.

The Princess of Wales is under the necessity once more to trouble Mr. Canning with a few lines. In the first place the Princess sends enclosed the copy of a letter which she wrote yesterday, after having read in the newspaper the speech of Mr. Tierney on the rising of Parliament, to Mr. Whitbread, not being acquainted personally with Mr. Tierney. The Princess shall be much obliged to Mr. Canning, if he will communicate the letter to Lord Liverpool, and make any use of it he pleases. In the second place, the Princess is obliged to mention to Mr. Canning also, that Mr. Whitbread, Mr. Brougham, and Co. have apprised the Princess, either from motives of too great anxiety for the welfare of the Princess of Wales and Princess Charlotte, or from a mere Opposition spleen, to anticipate misfortunes before they exist, which the Princess trusts such cruel proceedings never will take place; namely, they are fearful, if she was to stay for a long space out of this kingdom, the Prince Regent and his ministers would endeavour if they could obtain a divorce in favour of the Prince Regent to be able to marry again, to have a son, and to rob in this manner Princess Charlotte of her right of succession to the throne; and if such measures were taken by the sovereign and his ministers, the Princess of Wales would be liable to be accused of being the cause of a civil war, as it would make a great disturbance in the kingdom about the future succession.

The Princess desires Mr. Canning to communicate to the Earl of Liverpool this letter, that she certainly shall not change her resolution of going abroad; but that if such hints should be given in the newspapers of such plans as the Princess has mentioned above, the Prince Regent nor his ministers could be surprised at the Princess's sudden return to this country, as much reluctance and disagreeableness she should feel about it; however

## LORD LIVERPOOL

miserable it would make her, she would willingly make the sacrifice for Princess Charlotte, which would be also due to her own character. The Princess begs Mr. Canning to impress this much upon Lord Liverpool's mind, that the Princess acts from pure and noble principles in the intention of going abroad, as it is for the peace and tranquillity of the Prince Regent, the Princess Charlotte, the country, and herself, of which all parties have been bereft so many years. That if such an event was now planned by the Regent or his ministers, they would not be surprised if the Princess would immediately return to England, to maintain her rights, and those of her daughter.

The Princess is persuaded that Mr. Canning's sentiments upon this point will be congenial with her own, in perceiving that the Princess acts only from motives of self-defence, for her daughter and herself, if she should be forced to return to this country.<sup>1</sup>

Canning did what was asked of him, and received the following reply from Liverpool:

*Private.*

Coombe Wood,  
*August 5th, 1814.*

My dear Canning,

I return you the Princess of Wales's letter, which I have read, as you may suppose, with no little amusement. I know not what assurance it will be possible to give her: the Prince could not divorce her (even if he were desirous of doing so) except by the authority of Parliament, and Parliament could not authorize a divorce in her Royal Highness's case any more than in any other, unless upon the proof of adultery. I do not see therefore that the Princess of Wales is less safe in this respect abroad than she would be in England. Her Royal Highness's friends must be aware of this, and must mean to insinuate that her conduct is less likely to be correct upon the Continent than when she is under their influence; such an insinuation is not very respectful to her Royal Highness. At all events, however, as there is no power to prevent her Royal Highness's return to this country, and as no condition to this effect has been attempted to be imposed upon her, I do not see why she need be alarmed. I have taken copies of her letter, but, if I have done wrong, I will destroy them.

Ever sincerely yours,

Liverpool.

The position, as outlined by the Prime Minister, was explained by Canning to the Princess, who then departed for the Continent. That night the Regent is said to have drunk the toast, "To the damnation of the Princess of Wales—and may

<sup>1</sup> The style of this letter would seem to prove that it was the unaided composition of the Princess herself.

she never come back.”<sup>1</sup> The wish was genuine, but it was not to be fulfilled.

The departure of Caroline was far from putting an end to Liverpool's difficulties where the Royal Family was concerned, for the Regent was proving himself as tyrannical a father as he had been an undutiful son and an unfaithful husband. Princess Charlotte was now eighteen, but although she was heir presumptive to the throne she had no separate establishment, no control over her own movements, and she was not allowed to play any part in the festivities of that extremely festive summer of 1814. She had for a time been engaged to the Prince of Orange, under pressure from her father, for reasons which may well have been those suggested by Lady C. Campbell, who noted in her *Diary* under date of May 21st, “The Prince of O., it is said, wishes his wife to go with him to his own Dutch land, and so does the Prince Regent, who does not like a rising sun in his own; but report also whispers that the *rising sun* is aware of this, and will not consent to the marriage unless she is allowed to shine in her own dominions.” However this may be, Charlotte broke off the match, an act which did nothing to recommend her to her father. In short, the country was presented with another example of that antagonism between parent and child which marked every generation of the House of Hanover.

Such being the case, it was in no way surprising that Charlotte should have sided with her mother in her quarrel with her father. In his anger, the Regent dismissed all his daughter's attendants and replaced them by others on whom he could rely; whereupon the Princess, who was a high-spirited young woman, fled from Warwick House in a hackney-carriage across London to Connaught House, where Caroline was at that time living. She was persuaded to return by the Duke of York and the Lord Chancellor, but not before the news of her flight had been spread all over the land, with the result that the stock of the monarchy fell still lower, and the Regent became, if possible, even more unpopular than before. Thereafter he treated her with greater severity, and the heir to the throne was kept under what amounted to house arrest. She was not allowed to receive

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Leslie, Doris, *The Great Corinthian*, p. 196.

any visitors without her father's written permission, even when they were of the rank of the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and when she went to the Opera, it was given out that "if there was much applause, she will not be allowed to come again."<sup>1</sup> These restrictions continued for another two years, when she married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg.

These repeated scandals were bad enough from the point of view of the government, which had to support the throne, but the situation was made even worse when the Duke of Sussex raised the matter in the House of Lords and addressed a series of questions to Liverpool as to the treatment which his niece was receiving. The Prime Minister flatly refused to make any answer whatsoever, and in this attitude he was supported by his fellow-peers.

More pleasant, but hardly less distracting, to a busy statesman were the social activities which, as has been shown, marked that summer, and the many visitors took up time which Liverpool could ill spare from the preparations for the Congress of Vienna. There was one, however, to whom he would in any event probably have paid little attention as being a very minor princeling, and that was the younger son of the King of Prussia: yet, of all that galaxy, he was the harbinger of a new and very different era, for one day he was to despoil his host's nephew of his kingdom of Hanover; was, with the aid of Bismarck, to become Emperor of a united Germany; and was to be contemporary with the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, who was then unborn. No one in that round of gaiety could have foreseen the age of "blood and iron" which he and his minister were to inaugurate with such fatal consequences to mankind; and he was an unimportant spectator of such events as the Chapter of the Order of the Garter, which was held at Carlton House on June 9th, when not only his father and the Tsar, but also Liverpool and Castlereagh, were made Knights of the Order. There was, however, what may be termed an educational side to this concourse of distinguished foreigners, for Liverpool and his colleagues took good care that there was a naval review at Portsmouth where they witnessed the evolu-

<sup>1</sup> *Miss Knight's Diary*, vol. II, p. 55 *et seq.* The Princess was allowed to go to the Opera or a play once a week.

tions of a fleet which the united force of all their countries could not have hoped to equal.

With the approach of autumn, Liverpool's attention became concentrated upon the course of events in Vienna, and his correspondence both with Castlereagh and Wellington, who was now British ambassador in Paris, was extensive. In view of the charges of negligence which were later brought against him, it is interesting to note the constant supervision which he exercised over both men, while the shrewdness of many of his judgments deserves more notice than it has always received.

He took care, too, that Wellington should be kept informed of what was passing in the Austrian capital, as the following letter shows:

Fife House,  
*September 2nd, 1814.*

My dear Duke,

I am much obliged to you for your letter of the 20th ult., and am happy to find that your reception at Paris has been so satisfactory.

Castlereagh had only time to write before he left Paris on the American question. He has promised to make his reports on other points by a messenger he will despatch upon the road.

I am pleased, however, upon the whole with the account Sir C. Stuart<sup>1</sup> gives of his conversation with Talleyrand, in his despatch No. 126. Upon the point of the Sardinian succession it is impossible not to concur with the French Government. Our ideas, likewise, very much agree on the subject of Poland, and I feel as much anxiety as he has expressed for the removal of Murat from Naples, provided it can be done without a war; but the more I have reflected upon the subject the more I am convinced, that, for all our interests, but especially for those of France, every effort must be made to prevent the sword being drawn in Europe under any pretence for a few years to come. I should hope, however, that the defect of Murat's title to the throne of Naples may induce him to accept of a compromise, particularly when he finds that the King of Sicily will consent to receive no indemnity for the crown of Naples; that the Kings of France and Spain will not acknowledge him; and that he may have the pledged faith of all the Powers of Europe for the alternative proposed to him.

Upon the subject of Austria and Prussia, we must always expect a degree of jealousy on the part of every French Government. It is quite essential, however, to any balance of power, that these two monarchies should be

<sup>1</sup> Later Lord Stuart de Rothesay. Wellington's predecessor in Paris, where he was again ambassador 1815-1824, and 1828-1831.



## LORD LIVERPOOL

made respectable. The principle recognised in the early part of this year, that Austria should have a population of about 27,000,000 of souls, and Prussia one of about 11,000,000, appears to be quite reasonable, and ought to give no umbrage to France, particularly when the extent and advantages of the French empire are considered on the one hand, and those of the Russian empire on the other.

With respect to the nature of the Germanic constitution, that may, I think, be fairly left to the German Powers. It must be the interest both of Prussia and Austria, when their limits are once defined, that neither should encroach upon the subordinate states; and France and Russia will always be sufficiently powerful to prevent any projects of partition on the part of the preponderating German Powers. I see no serious difficulty, therefore, in an amicable arrangement of all these questions, and I should feel very much disposed to act with perfect frankness towards the French Government on all of them.

I congratulate you on the turn which affairs have taken in Norway. I am quite sure that under such circumstances our policy was right on this question, but yet I felt events might take a course which would make it the most awkward and embarrassing of any in our European politics. The union of Norway and Sweden will, I hope, now take place without any further effusion of blood; but at all events the abdication of Prince Christian, the surrender of the fortress, and the negotiation which the Swedish Government has opened with the Norwegian Diet, relieves us from any further difficulty in the business. We may possibly be called in as mediators, but it cannot be expected that we should go to war with either party if they cannot now agree.

We had prepared an answer to the note of the American Commissioners before we received Castlereagh's letter, and very much in the spirit of the memorandum which he sent to us. Copies of these papers shall be transmitted to you in a few days. Our Commissioners had certainly taken an erroneous view of the line to be adopted. It is very material to throw the rupture of the negotiation, if it is to take place, upon the Americans, and not to allow them to say that we have brought forward points as ultimatums which were only brought forward for discussion, and at the desire of the American Commissioners themselves.

The American note is a most impudent one, and, as to all its reasoning, capable of an irresistible answer, which, if it should be necessary to publish it, I am persuaded will have its proper effect in America.

I do not think there is much chance of the negotiation proceeding at present, but I incline to think that, after the answer we have now sent, the American Commissioners will refer to their Government for further instructions. In this, however, I may be mistaken.

We shall anxiously await the progress of your negotiation on the abolition of the Slave-trade. I had a letter from Wilberforce yesterday, which proves to me that the Abolitionists in this country will press the question in every possible shape. We must do therefore all we can, and at least be able to

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show that no efforts have been omitted on our part to give effect to the addresses of the two Houses of Parliament.

I am, etc.,

Liverpool.

Progress at Vienna was slow, chiefly because the Russian demands were excessive. The Tsar was firmly convinced that he had been the main factor in the overthrow of Napoleon, and that he was in consequence entitled to dictate the terms of peace to his allies. This was in no way the view of the British government.

*Most Secret and Confidential.*

Fife House,  
September 25th, 1814.

My dear Castlereagh,

We received yesterday your letters of the 5th and 11th inst. I can assure you that we are fully sensible of all the difficulties in which you have been involved, and entirely concur with you on the substantial points for which you have been contending.

We were certainly apprehensive that the course the negotiations were taking with Russia might unintentionally lead us further than we had any idea of going, and eventually produce a renewal of the war in Europe. It may be quite true that, if the Emperor of Russia does not relax in his present demands, the peace of Europe may not be of long continuance; but for however short a time that peace may last, I should consider it of great advantage.

In the course of two or three years it may reasonably be expected that the King's power in France will be consolidated, and that the revolutionary spirit, which still exists to such an alarming degree in that country, will in a great measure have evaporated; the people will have returned to peaceful habits, and the landed and monied interests will feel their fate connected with that of the restored Government. In two or three years, likewise, the Prince of Orange will, I trust, have been enabled firmly to establish his authority in the Low Countries; will have raised an army for the defence of his dominions, and have made some progress in erecting a barrier against his neighbours. But, if war should be renewed at present, I fear that we should lose all we have gained; that the revolutionary spirit would break forth again in full force, and the Continent would be plunged in all the evils under which it has groaned for the last twenty years.

A war now, therefore, may be a revolutionary war. A war some time hence, though an evil, need not be different in its character and its effects from any of those wars which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before the commencement of the French Revolution. In short, this appears to me to be the precise period in which the sentiment of Cicero,

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so often quoted by Mr. Fox, is really in point: "*Iniquissimam pacem justissimo bello antefero.*"

I entertain these sentiments so strongly that, though I should most deeply regret the continuance of Murat on the throne of Naples as a sort of taint in our general arrangements; and though I think therefore that all means should be used, consistent with our engagements, to negotiate him out of his present kingdom; yet, if such means should fail, as I fear they will, and the question should be whether any of the Powers of Europe should take up arms to drive him out of his dominions, my opinion would certainly be against such a measure. I think the positive benefit resulting from the success of it is not to be compared, under present circumstances, to the evils that might arise out of the attempt.

The reasoning in your last paper in answer to the Emperor of Russia is quite triumphant; but I believe the truth to be, that he is committed to the Poles, and the dread of the re-integration of Poland as it existed in 1772 or 1791, and the effect of such a sacrifice upon the Russian nobility and Russian people, are the only considerations that will induce him to give way; he will be quite deaf to every appeal to justice, moderation, or to the engagements which he contracted with Prussia and Austria in the course of the last campaign.

We must likewise not conceal from ourselves that we shall have a hard battle to fight against public opinion, in defence of any arrangements for which the independence of Poland does not now form a part.

If the arrangements respecting the Duchy of Warsaw could have been quietly settled amongst the three Powers, as the result of the Treaty of Kalisch, and of that of the 9th of September 1813, we should never have had any serious difficulty on the subject, and it would have been wholly unnecessary, and I think very imprudent, for us ever to have started the idea of Poland or of Polish independence; but it becomes very difficult to defend the partition of the Duchy of Warsaw as one of the alternatives to Polish independence, when the question of Polish independence has been once brought forward. We must, however, do our best in this respect, fully satisfied that we have acted from no other motive than that which was likely to contribute most, upon the whole, to the peace and tranquillity of Europe.

It seems difficult to imagine what course this whole business is likely to take in Congress. I trust the means will exist, however, of protesting against what it may not be prudent to resist, or at least that care may be taken that we are not parties to transactions which we have such strong reasons, on every account, to disapprove.

I am, etc.,

Liverpool.

Among Castlereagh's small staff at Vienna was Sir Edward Cooke, the Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, of whom Sir Harold Nicolson has written that he "adopted towards the

Congress the detached and ironical attitude of the chronic invalid."<sup>1</sup> Whatever may have been the state of his health, Cooke was certainly experienced in the ways of the world, and if he was a cynic, no other attitude could be expected from one who had been Under-Secretary in Ireland at the time of the Union. When he accompanied his chief to Vienna he was in his late fifties, and one of his duties was to paint in the background of the Congress for the benefit of the Prime Minister.

*Most Confidential.*

Vienna,

October 20th, 1814.

My dear Lord,

You will see by Lord Castlereagh's letters that we are still in the dark, and do not advance. Affairs stick with Metternich, who, I believe, will never play a great straightforward game but by mere necessity, and when he finds that all little and side games fail.

In the meantime the Emperor of Russia fancies that he can manage by address his imperial and royal colleagues. He flirts, and plays the amiable from morning till night, and flatters himself with complete success by his cajoleries.

There have been fine displays of sentiment. The Emperor of Russia has been appointed to the command of the regiment of Hiller, which he placed himself at the head of the other day in the Prater, and there was an affecting scene between him and the Emperor of Austria. The King of Prussia has another Austrian regiment, and we have prints in the shops of the three Sovereigns, and under them "The Sacred League." All this nonsense tells. To-morrow, or the day after, all the Courts set off for Basle, and will be absent five or six days, so there will be little time after their return for the first of November, if there is to be an arrangement.

In the meantime the *fêtes* go on at an immense expense. The review in the Prater of near 20,000 men, and the dinner of the Courts and whole army was really imposing and grand. Metternich's ball in the evening was equally superb. I understand Stadion, who is at the head of the finance, begins to complain loudly of the expense, and that it is too much for him in addition to 30,000 men in arms.<sup>2</sup> The Emperor of Austria also is almost worn out.

Talleyrand wants to make an explosion, and, if Lord Castlereagh does not, I think he will. I have tried to force Metternich to act by goading his *employés*, who all profess to be of our sentiments, and eager to forward them,

<sup>1</sup> *The Congress of Vienna*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> In a moment of rash generosity the Austrian government had offered to defray the delegates' expenses. "*Questi infallibilisti mi faranno fallire*," Pius IX complained of the General Council of 1870, and the Austrian Emperor may well have expressed similar sentiments.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

but they do not speak with confidence as to their principal. They see the game, that on one hand Poland and Saxony must both be surrendered, and on the other Saxony only; on the one hand Saxony and their frontier lost, on the other Saxony lost, but their frontier saved; on the one hand Prussia made a vassal of Russia, and Austria thrown for self-defence into the arms of France; on the other Prussia and Austria combined for the protection of Germany, and the independence of Europe, against Russia and France, if she should join Russia, which at present seems impossible.

In the meantime Bavaria wishes to act with Austria in order to form her *anondissement*, and from jealousy of Wirtemberg. The latter is said to be Russian, and the Crown Prince's views on the Archduchess of Oldenburgh<sup>1</sup> are said to be still favoured, but I do not learn that anything on that point is settled.

In this state you may naturally believe that Lord Castlereagh is rather fidgety. I begin to think it may be best for Europe that nothing should be done before the first of November, and that a broad statement should be made that nothing would be brought forward because Russia would not declare that she was bound by her treaties. Of course this will be avoided if possible.

All this is to yourself alone, so you will burn my letter.

Ever most truly your Lordship's servant,

E. Cooke.

The question of Saxony was certainly one of the most contentious of those which faced the Congress, and as Cooke pointed out in his letter to Liverpool it had become connected with the problem of Poland. The King of Saxony had, unfortunately for himself, been slower than the other German potentates in leaving the sinking ship of Napoleon, and in consequence he was not a participant in the festivities at Vienna, but was a prisoner at Friedrichsfelde. By the Treaty of Kalisch on February 28th, 1813, to which Liverpool referred in his letter of September 25th to Castlereagh, and which was one of the many conventions made among the Allies during the war to satisfy one another's appetites, an extension of Prussian territory in North Germany had been promised, while Russia, by implication, was accorded a free hand in the disposal of Poland. Alexander and Frederick William now interpreted this to mean that Saxony was to go to Prussia and Poland to Russia, a view which was far from being held by Castlereagh and Metternich. On the other hand the Tsar

<sup>1</sup> The Tsar's sister, the Grand Duchess Catherine, who had married Prince George of Oldenburg.

showed no disposition to accept any compromise. "I have 200,000 soldiers in the Duchy of Warsaw," he said. "Let them try and drive them from it. I have given Saxony to Prussia."

The immediate beneficiary of these differences of opinion was France. When Talleyrand arrived at Vienna as the representative of Louis XVIII, he found that it was the intention to treat his country as a pariah, but Castlereagh and Metternich needed French help to outweigh the influence of St. Petersburg and Berlin, and this was to give Talleyrand his chance.

*Most Private.*

Vienna,

October 25th, 1814.

My dear Lord,

I yet am almost quite benighted. They say Czartoriski with assistance is preparing an answer to Lord Castlereagh's papers, at which I rejoice, for if once the Emperor of Russia can be brought to a *guerre de plume* I think matters may be brought to bear. In the mean time Talleyrand wants to enter a *caveat* on Saxony, and he has drawn a *drôlerie* on the law of nations in order to save Saxony and destroy Murat at one stroke. I was desired by Lord Castlereagh to request he would not give in his note till he had seen his Lordship, and when I left him he assented. He seems miserable that any system should be found for defending the North of Germany against Russia without the march of French armies beyond the Rhine; and he said France was more ready for war than any country in Europe. He is *acharné* against Prussia, cannot bear an alliance with Austria, or tolerate the idea that Austria and Prussia should be able to defend the North of Germany.

I think, if the Emperor can be brought to book on the point of Poland, Prussia will not object to preserve Saxony in part, and so things may go on, but this is all in the clouds. In the meantime Prussia and Austria are getting closer.

Talleyrand's principle is this: There is no judge of sovereigns; sovereigns always retain their rights till they cede them; all dispossession without a cession is illegal.

I asked where he found this new theory, for I never had found it in any author. He said in the history of the last three centuries. I agreed with the fact that all dispossessed sovereigns had made acts of cession because they received compensation, but I never could understand that the act of cession made the *droit*, however it might be in *actus expletorius juris*, and it was an odd principle to make the consent of a criminal the foundation of the right to punish him.

I am not sure whether delay and a new adjournment will not be the happiest measure, though one must wish for Europe to speak out. I am sure you must feel for Lord Castlereagh. As for the Emperor of Russia, he dances

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while Rome is burning. He plays the lion after hunting, dividing the prey: "I take one part to give me the keys of Berlin; I take the second to give me the keys of Vienna, and I claim the third for the *beau moral*." If I tried to write seriously I should only confuse your Lordship. We must wait the first of November.

Ever most truly your Lordship's servant,

E. Cooke.

PS. There is an assembly here. I have fled from the heat. Pozzo di Borgo<sup>1</sup> talked to me in mournful tone. He says the Emperor is quite wicked. He abused Metternich yesterday, and was very violent. He has affronted many of his generals by giving the regiments to colonels and giving them nothing in their place. He has abused Nesselrode.<sup>2</sup> The King of Prussia has promised to do nothing in the journey which can damage the plans adopted. When he finds Prussia fall off he will be furious.

The progress, or rather the lack of progress, of events at Vienna was beginning to cause Liverpool a certain amount of concern, and he feared that Britain was becoming excessively implicated in the affairs of Poland, which were no real concern of hers. On October 28th, therefore, he wrote to Castlereagh to the effect that "we have done enough on this subject of Poland, and . . . the time is now come when, according to one of your former despatches, it would be far better that we should withdraw ourselves from the question altogether, and reserve ourselves for points on which we have a more immediate and direct interest." Liverpool enclosed with this letter a memorandum from Vansittart which "contains very much the impression of several of our other colleagues." The main point made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was to advocate more conciliatory methods in dealing with the Tsar, and he gave it as his opinion that "we ought to avoid irritating Russia by a pertinacious opposition which is unlikely to be successful." This provoked the following reply from Castlereagh:

*Private.*

Vienna,

November 1814.

My dear Liverpool,

As Cooke sends you the anecdotes of the day, "*pour servir à l'histoire*," I shall not encroach on his province. You may be assured his Imperial

<sup>1</sup> A Russian diplomat of Corsican origin.

<sup>2</sup> Chief Russian representative at the Congress. He was born in Portugal; was a German by origin and education; was an Anglican by baptism; and was a Russian by adoption.

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Majesty does not rise in our estimation, either as a man, or as a politician; and you must make up your mind to watch him, and to resist him if necessary as another Buonaparte. You may rely upon it, my friend Van's philosophy is untrue as applied to him; acquiescence will not keep him back, nor will opposition accelerate his march. His Imperial Majesty is never more condescending than to those who speak plainly but respectfully to him; and if I were to speculate upon the course most likely to save your money, and to give you the longest interval of peace with such a character, I should say that it would lie in never suffering him for a moment to doubt your readiness to support the continental Powers against his ambitious encroachments. I am not the least afraid of his stirring maritime questions here; other Powers will first experience the effects of his character, and our best chance of keeping the danger at a distance will be to make him understand that we do not mean to desert them. There is no sort of reason to apprehend their being indiscreetly prone to resistance. In suffering them to fall within the vortex of his influence, we shall only bring the struggle upon points of vital consequence, which we cannot yield with an accumulated and perhaps accelerated pressure. With such a personage at the head of between forty and fifty millions of people prone to, and adapted to, war, you cannot afford to dissolve your continental relations, unless you are prepared to acquiesce in a domination that would very soon assume the character of that from which we have escaped, and would certainly not degenerate from it in a disposition to circumscribe the power of Great Britain.

The events in America are unfortunate, as tending powerfully to protract that war. It makes little sensation here. I have found no inquisitiveness upon the nature of the negotiations at Ghent.

Ever yours, my dear Lord, most sincerely,

Castlereagh.

The last sentence of this letter must have reassured Liverpool, for he was becoming apprehensive that Alexander might espouse the cause of the United States in retaliation for the British attitude in respect of Poland and Saxony. The conflict across the Atlantic was still being conducted in a desultory manner, and the two years' fighting had reflected little credit upon either combatant. The American attempts upon Canada had failed, while the British generals had relapsed into all the old errors of the former war, and military operations were reduced to the level of piratical excursions. The Americans perpetrated many barbarities on the Canadian frontier, to which the British replied by loosing the Indians on them, and by burning all the public buildings in Washington when that



city fell into their hands. That the war was an embarrassment, if nothing more, to Britain was certainly true, for it necessitated the diversion of naval and military forces from Europe, where they were greatly needed. During the conflict, for example, the United States sent out 515 privateers, and thus a heavy demand was made upon the Admiralty for the smaller type of fighting vessel; while it was a severe blow to British pride that no fewer than 16,000 Englishmen were said to have been serving on board the American fleet, for the industrial depression at home had driven them from their own country.

Negotiations for a settlement had been taking place during the greater part of the year 1814, for as early as January 7th President Madison had communicated to Congress a proposal from Castlereagh for the appointment of plenipotentiaries to treat on terms of peace either at London or Gothenburg. This offer came at just the right moment so far as the President was concerned, for the northern States of the Union were beginning to display open opposition to the continuance of the war. Negotiations were accordingly opened at Gothenburg, but in August they were moved to Ghent.

Such was the position when, at the beginning of November, news reached Downing Street that Wellington's life might be in danger if he remained any longer in Paris. Liverpool took this threat very seriously.

*Most Secret and Confidential.*

Fife House,  
November 4th, 1814.

My dear Castlereagh,

I send you a copy of a letter<sup>1</sup> I have this day written to the Duke of Wellington, in consequence of communications which I have held with Lieutenant-General Macaulay, Hamilton, and Lord Harrowby.

Whether the information we have received is or is not exaggerated, the whole Cabinet is of opinion that we should not be justified in allowing the Duke of Wellington to incur the risk to which he might be exposed by his continuance at Paris at the present moment. Although the Duke of Wellington leaves the question entirely to our decision, he is evidently not insensible to his own danger, particularly to the danger of being detained as a hostage or prisoner, in the event of any internal convulsion in Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. II, pp. 55-6.

## PEACE-MAKING

The point of the Duke of Wellington's quitting Paris being decided, I confess I feel most anxious, under all the circumstances, that he should accept the command in America. There is no other person we can send there really equal to the situation except Lord Niddry.<sup>1</sup> Bathurst had a communication with him. He would be willing to go if his health and wounds would permit, but his surgeons give no hopes of his being able to undertake the service for some months, and they doubt if they would suffer him to go even then.

The Duke of Wellington would restore confidence to the army, place the military operations upon a proper footing, and give us the best chance of peace. I know he is very anxious for the restoration of peace with America, if it can be made on terms at all honorable. It is a material consideration likewise, if we shall be disposed, for the sake of peace, to give up something of our just pretensions, we can do this more creditably through him than through any other person.

I wish very much that we could have had a communication with you before we came to this decision, but from the nature of the case delay was impossible. It was quite essential to remove him from Paris, and it was not less so to decide on the ground on which that removal was to take place. Besides, if we are to have the advantage of his services in America, the sooner it is known and the sooner he can go the better. This appointment will in itself be sufficient to obviate many difficulties and much embarrassment at home.

Believe me, etc.,

Liverpool.

A few days later Liverpool explained to Wellington the views of himself and his colleagues on the situation in North America.

*Most Secret and Confidential.*

Fife House,

*November 13th, 1814.*

My dear Duke,

I received at the same time your two letters of the 7th and 9th inst. and have communicated them to the Cabinet.

We are all as anxious as ever for your leaving Paris without delay, though we have not thought it right to give you an official order for that purpose.

We are not insensible to some advantages which might arise from your remaining there at present; but we cannot allow ourselves on public grounds to place them even for a moment in comparison with the dangers to which you are exposed, if the information we have now received from so many quarters can be credited.

With respect to the ground for your removal, the court martial on Sir

<sup>1</sup> Second-in-Command to Sir John Moore, whom he succeeded after the battle of Corunna. Later fourth Earl of Hopetoun; died 1823.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

John Murray<sup>1</sup> would, in our judgment, answer the object, as it cannot be instituted till the arrival of the officers who have been sent for from Spain, and they cannot be expected for five or six weeks.

The command in America would give general satisfaction here, and would appear at Paris sufficient to account for you not returning. It would not be necessary that you should leave this country for America immediately. Your departure might be deferred partly on account of the season, and partly on account of the state of the negotiation. If the negotiation should end satisfactorily the command will, of course, cease; if, on the other hand, it should terminate unfavorably, your sailing might still be delayed till the months of February or March, and if the course of events should render your continuance in Europe at that time necessary, we should have sufficient ground for making some new arrangement as to the command in America.

Your appointment therefore to the command in America does not render your going there by any means necessary if it should hereafter be judged inexpedient, but it is the best ground for getting you from Paris at this moment, and it may have an advantageous effect upon the negotiations at Ghent.

With respect to those negotiations we are waiting anxiously for the American project. We consider the question is quite open to us, and, without entering into particulars now, I believe I can assure you that we shall be disposed to meet your views upon the points on which the negotiation appears to turn at present.

Upon the question of the lakes in North America, we are fully aware of the importance of establishing a naval superiority upon them. Every effort is making for that purpose, but it is impossible to give any decided opinion as to the result, as it must depend upon the exertions which the enemy are capable of making, especially in building and equipping, and it must always be recollected that they are close to their resources, and we are at an immense distance from ours.

If I were to give an individual opinion on this subject, I should say that there were some of the lakes on which I think we ought to be able to acquire and maintain a decided superiority, and that there were others on which we could not expect to maintain that superiority permanently, even if it were possible to acquire it. For example, I should say that Lake Champlain was so conveniently situated with respect to the United States, with the populous province of Vermont on one side and that of New York on the other, that the Americans ought to have the means even with ordinary exertions of increasing their force more rapidly than we could increase ours, considering the scanty resources of Canada, and the distance of Canada from Great Britain. On the other hand they have not the same advantages with respect to Lake Ontario, and it is understood that we can build larger ships at Kingston than they can build at Sackett's Harbour. If, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> For incompetence in the conduct of operations in the East of Spain. He was sentenced to be admonished, but the verdict was quashed by the Regent,

our superiority was once decidedly established on this lake, I think we ought to be able to maintain it. You may depend, however, on every exertion being made in this branch of the service which is practicable, and no means would be withheld which you might think it important to propose for this purpose.

If after having considered, however, all that I have said about the command in America, you are still of opinion that it is not the best ground on which you can rest your departure from Paris, and any other reason should appear to you to have fewer inconveniences attending it, we have no objection to you availing yourself of that reason, whatever it may be. We only beg that you would let us know what it is, in order that we may be ready, immediately on your arrival, to assign it as the cause of your return to England.

I cannot however avoid again repeating that, whatever may be the ground which it may be proper to assign for your quitting Paris, we shall not feel easy till we hear of your having landed at Dover, or at all events of your being out of the French territory; and, in leaving the precise time and mode of departure to your discretion, we most earnestly entreat you to return to England with as little delay as possible.

The necessity and nature of any communication to the French Government previous to your departure must be left entirely to your own discretion; but we are of opinion that your intention of leaving Paris should be as little known there as possible before it is actually carried into execution.

Believe me, etc.,

Liverpool.

Fortunately for all concerned, peace was signed between Great Britain and the United States before Wellington was sent to America. Had he crossed the Atlantic, the overthrow of the United States must inevitably have followed, for they had no general of his calibre whom they could have put into the field against him. On the other hand he would have been in the New World when Napoleon escaped from Elba, in which case Waterloo might easily have been a French victory, and the consequences of that would have been incalculable.

The threat of sending Wellington to America had, as Liverpool suggested in his letter, not been without its influence upon the American representatives at Ghent. In August they had told Madison that "We need hardly say that the demands of Great Britain will receive from us an unanimous and decided negative. . . . There is not at present any hope of peace." They soon, however, began to adopt a more reasonable tone, especially when they realized that there was no hope of any

Continental Power coming to their assistance. Liverpool laid particular emphasis upon this point in a letter which he wrote on October 21st to Henry Goulburn, the senior British plenipotentiary at Ghent. "Is there any prospect that foreign Powers will embark in the war to support the Americans? You may rely upon it that they are all too much exhausted to come willingly forward on such an occasion: besides, no Power could render the Americans any great assistance but Spain and France. Spain is disposed to resent the injuries she has received from the American Government and is ready to make common cause with us in the war if we desire it. The King of France and all his family are fully persuaded that Louis XVI lost his crown in consequence of the former American war, and the last contest, I am convinced, in which they will be disposed to engage, is a war with Great Britain on account of America." So a treaty of peace and amity was signed on December 24th, 1814. It dealt almost wholly with the problem of frontiers, and no mention was made of the maritime questions on account of which the war had begun.

The news of what was happening at Ghent had its repercussions in the Austrian capital, where it was perceived that Britain would be in a much stronger position as soon as she had the American war off her hands. In these circumstances Castlereagh and Metternich proposed the admission of France on an equal footing with the other Great Powers, and although this suggestion was by no means to the liking of Russia and Prussia they had no ground for objecting to it, and on December 24th what had been a Committee of Four became one of Five. The next move of the Tsar and the Prussians was to attempt to win France to their side with a most tempting bribe. This was nothing less than the establishment on the left bank of the Rhine of an entirely new state with the Saxon dynasty on the throne. It was to include the territory of the Duchy of Luxembourg, and a portion of that of the Archbishopric of Trèves, as well as the Abbeys of Prüm, Stavelot, and Malmédy.

Castlereagh and Metternich both opposed this suggestion very strongly indeed. The Austrian Chancellor had no desire to see Prussia strengthened by the absorption of the whole of

Saxony, while the British Foreign Secretary feared that the new state would become a mere appanage of France. Yet, in retrospect, it is difficult not to regret that the proposal was not adopted. Had it been, many of the troubles of the next hundred years might have been avoided, for the new kingdom would have had a Catholic population with French tendencies, while the dynasty could, in view of the loss of Saxony, have been relied upon to be anti-Prussian for many a long year. In short, an admirable buffer would have been erected between France and the most aggressive of the German tribes.

From the first, however, it was clear that Great Britain and Austria would fight sooner than accept the suggestion, and Talleyrand preferred to adopt the standpoint of London and Vienna rather than incur the risk of a fresh war. Accordingly, he signed a treaty of alliance, which Castlereagh copied out with his own hand to ensure secrecy, on January 3rd, 1815, by which each of the three Powers promised to provide 150,000 men in the event of hostilities being provoked by Russia and Prussia. In this way Talleyrand turned the differences between the Allies to the advantage of his own country, and France became the associate of her foes of less than a year before. "Now, Sir," he wrote to Louis XVIII, "the coalition is dissolved, and for ever."<sup>1</sup> This treaty remained secret until Napoleon found the French King's copy in the archives at Paris during the Hundred Days, and published it; but the suspicion that some such agreement was in being induced Russia and Prussia to compromise, and two days after the treaty was signed Castlereagh wrote to Liverpool, "I have every reason to hope that the alarm of war is over." In the end Saxony lost two-fifths of her territory to Prussia, while the Tsar obtained the lion's share of Poland, the rest going to Prussia. Frederick William also received the greater part of the Rhineland, to which Castlereagh made no objection as it coincided with his policy of placing strong states on the borders of France.

By February 1815 most of the questions in which Britain was chiefly interested had been settled, and so Castlereagh returned to London, his place in Vienna being taken by

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. II, p. 556.

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Wellington. The Foreign Secretary had wished to remain in the Austrian capital until the Congress had completed its labours, but Liverpool wanted him back on the Treasury Bench. Of the short autumn session of 1814 the Prime Minister had written that "it was some years since he had seen party spirit and rancour exist in the same degree as they did then," while "our friends *en première ligne* in the House of Commons have proved themselves not equal to the burden." So, when Parliament met on February 9th, 1815, Castlereagh was in his accustomed place, and it soon became apparent that every question of home and foreign policy would be fiercely canvassed by the Opposition, while at Vienna an apparently interminable discussion was taking place with regard to the future of Italy. Such was the position when, on March 1st, Napoleon landed in France. Liverpool's views on the Hundred Days, which then ensued, are to be found in two letters which he wrote to Canning, who had temporarily abandoned politics for the Lisbon embassy.

*Private and Confidential.*

Fife House,

*April 19th, 1815.*

My dear Canning,

I am quite ashamed of not having written to you since the late extraordinary change which has taken place in France, but Huskisson promised me that he would keep you generally *au courant des affaires*, and my time has been so incessantly occupied by official and other duties that I feel confident you will excuse me.

Although there had been reason to believe, for some months, that there existed cabals against the Government of Louis XVIII, yet it is certain that the fomentors of them never turned their eyes towards Buonaparte till a short time before his return. Their first object was to place the Duke of Orleans on the throne; and this would have been attempted if he had not refused to be their instrument. In fact, they want a king with a revolutionary title. Their pride was mortified by the events of last year, and they considered the termination of them as a reflection upon the Revolution, in which they had been all more or less engaged.

In saying this you will not understand me as implying an opinion that the great majority of the people of France were unfavourable to the Bourbons. I am convinced of the contrary; but the Jacobin party (which consists of the most able and desperate men in France), the greater part of the army, and most of the official employés were against them, and the nation had neither virtue nor energy to engage in a conflict for the support

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of him whom I really believe they considered as their lawful sovereign. It was unfortunate that the King could not employ Fouché; but, considering him as a regicide, it is impossible not to enter into Louis XVIII's feelings with regard to him. The King's policy with regard to the army is likewise now severely censured. It is said that he ought either to have adopted a plan for gradually disbanding the army, or that he should have trusted it. But he followed neither course. He kept the army up according to the state in which it was left by Buonaparte, and even augmented it, but he would not at the same time trust it about his person; and the establishment of his body guard, and his Swiss levies, were the causes of the greatest jealousy and discontent amongst the old regiments.

To look forward, however: I think I know your sentiments well enough to be satisfied that you will be of opinion that we have no other line to adopt than to renew the war against Buonaparte, provided the allies are disposed to embark heartily in the contest. I am happy in being able to assure you that there is not the slightest doubt on this head. All minor jealousies have been consigned to oblivion, and I should be at a loss to say whether Austria, Russia, or Prussia were most decided for active war, with a view to the destruction of Buonaparte and his power. We trust that by the middle of May all the allied armies will be on the frontier of France: the left (that upon the Upper Rhine) is to be commanded by Prince Schwartzemberg, the centre by Blücher, and the right by the Duke of Wellington. The latter is quite sanguine as to the result, and his residence in Paris has fortunately enabled him to form a tolerably just estimate of the military resources of France at the present crisis.

Whether the re-establishment of Louis XVIII will follow the downfall of Buonaparte, if it shall be accomplished, is a question of more difficulty. Though we have no right to dictate to France as to the form of their government or the person of their sovereign, we are bound in honour and justice not to countenance any project which is inconsistent with the rights of the legitimate sovereign, and which might be adopted by many as a compromise, if it appeared in any way to be not repugnant to the views of the allies.

The private accounts from Paris are by no means unfavourable. Buonaparte's government is certainly not gaining popularity. He is at present in the hands of the Jacobins, and they are jealous of him. He has great difficulties in augmenting his army and in raising money: at the same time it would be most imprudent to give him more time for preparation than was quite indispensable.

The moment for entering France is a nice question, for we must not begin our operations with an inadequate force, and we must not, on the other hand, delay them an hour longer than is absolutely necessary.

I should hope, however, that all will be ready between the 10th and the 20th of May. The Russians will by that time be on the Maine.

Believe me to be, etc.,

Liverpool.



LORD LIVERPOOL

The second letter was written during those days of suspense when all Europe was waiting for news from the Low Countries, and while Liverpool was writing it Napoleon was actually on the way to the front.

Fife House,

*June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1815.*

My dear Canning,

I hope you will long ago have recovered from all apprehension about the Princess of Wales. By the last accounts from Italy she had left Genoa for Milan, and intended to pass the summer at one of the villas near Lago di Como.

You will I doubt not have been most truly gratified by the success which has attended the Austrian operations in Italy. The entire deliverance of Italy at so early a period of the campaign cannot fail to be productive of the most important consequences. The Austrian armies in that quarter will now be disposable, and will probably be enabled to pass the Alps soon after the campaign shall have commenced on the side of the Rhine and of Flanders.

We may now be in daily expectation of hearing that the allied armies have entered France. The operations will probably begin on the Upper Rhine, as the most distant point from Paris: but we know that the Duke of Wellington and Blücher are both ready to move; and fortunately there subsists between them the most perfect union and cordiality.

During the twenty years we have passed in political life we have never witnessed a more awful moment than the present. It is impossible ever to answer for the result of military operations, but the chances are all in our favour. The two great problems appear to me to be whether the authorities at Paris, that is the Jacobins and Constitutionals, will endeavour to arrest the progress of the allies by overthrowing Buonaparte, and by proposing some compromise as to the internal government of France; and whether, if the allies succeed in again reaching Paris and in replacing Louis XVIII on the throne, he will be able to maintain himself there.

The latter will be a work of much difficulty. The King is certainly personally popular; Monsieur and the Duc de Berri hated; the Duchesse d'Angoulême respected and pitied, but not beloved; the Duc d'Angoulême rather liked. You will be surprised to hear that our old friend Monsieur is perhaps the most unpopular of the set. This arises from the influence the emigrants have over him, and from his being regarded as the essence of emigration. There appears to me to be a great resemblance between his character and that of many of the princes of the Stuart family. He is a perfect chevalier, but has no quality which belongs to a king or a prince in difficult times. The greatest danger to the old line of Bourbons is from the Duke of Orleans. He is the person to whom all the Jacobins and many of the Constitutionals look up as a resource in case of necessity. His

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guarded conduct at the present moment has created considerable alarm and suspicion amongst the friends of the King. There are some, however, who know him, and who think that, if even he got the better of all principle and sense of duty, he has not resolution enough to play so desperate a game.

It is unlucky that he should be at this time in this country. When we heard that he was coming over, we sent to stop him; but he arrived without having received our letters, and we could not then send him away.

Our session of Parliament is coming to a close, and, since the struggle on the Corn Bill, we have had no material difficulties to encounter. Upon the war, the country, with the exception of the old Opposition, has been nearly unanimous. Lord Grenville, Grattan, and Plunket have rendered us much service. Were you not surprised at Lord Wellesley adopting the peace policy, and going with the Whigs? I hardly know how to account for it; for, even supposing it to have been the opinion of any man that, provided the allies were agreed, a defensive system was under all the circumstances to be preferred, the question really was, whether we should take upon ourselves the responsibility of preventing a war against Buonaparte in opposition to the opinion of all Europe, after the manifest violations which had taken place of the treaties of Fontainebleau and of Paris. That we might have prevented the war I do not deny; but we could not have done so without giving up all hopes of ever rallying Europe again, and without making up our minds to an insulated policy as alone suited to our station.

I shall be glad to hear when you write again of the state of the health of your eldest son, which I hope has not suffered in consequence of the summer heats. I beg to be kindly remembered to Mrs. Canning, and believe me to be, etc.,

Liverpool.

Five days after this letter was written the fate of Europe for the next hundred years had been decided. No two men could have been more unlike than the great commanders who met that June Sunday at Waterloo. The Frenchman despised his opponent; said that he had no brain; and declared that the battle would be the affair of a *déjeuner*. The truth was that Wellington, whose judgment was always more sound than brilliant, had never been given the opportunity of conducting war on a great scale. He was for many a long year condemned to wage a defensive war so as to husband the scanty military resources of his country. That was the last thought of Napoleon, who in his later years reckoned little of losing 100,000 men if he could inflict a loss of 120,000 on the enemy. At the same time it must be admitted that both before and after a battle

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the Corsican got more out of his men than did the Irishman, who never enjoyed among his troops as a whole the popularity of Marlborough. Yet in the adoption of means to ends Wellington had no equal, and he was possessed of a patience denied to his rival.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor clung on to Moscow, and so threw away his best army; while, in similar circumstances, Wellington abandoned Madrid, thus saving his forces for the decisive Vittoria campaign. Again, at Waterloo, he held back the cavalry brigades of Vandeleur and Vivian, and at the crisis launched them on the enemy in a way which Napoleon himself considered decisive of the fate of the day. Whatever may have been the respective merits of the two generals, concerning which there is likely to be argument until the end of time, the issue was soon decided, and Liverpool and his colleagues were faced with the problem of what to do with the fallen Emperor and with France.

From the beginning the question of Napoleon's future was an intricate one, and gave rise to a number of considerations. On July 7th Liverpool wrote to Castlereagh, who was in Paris:

If he sails for either Rochfort or Cherbourg, we have a good chance of laying hold of him. If we take him, we shall keep him on board ship till the opinion of the allies has been taken. The most easy course would be to deliver him up to the King of France, who might try him as a rebel, but then we must be quite certain that he must be tried in such a manner as to have no chance of escape; indeed, nothing would really be necessary but the identification of his person. I have had some conversation with the civilians, and they are of opinion that this would be in all respects the least objectionable course. We should have a right to consider him as a French prisoner, and as such to give him up to the French Government; they think likewise that the King of France would have a clear right to consider him as a rebel, and to deal with him accordingly.

The Law Officers of the Crown were further consulted, and a meeting of the Cabinet was held to decide upon the policy to be pursued. A week later Liverpool wrote to Castlereagh again.

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon came to realize this, for during the voyage to England he told Bertrand, "The Duke of Wellington is fully equal to myself in the management of an army, with the advantage of possessing more prudence."

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*Secret and Confidential.*

Fife House,

July 15th, 1815.

My dear Castlereagh,

We have received this morning your despatches of the 12th inst.

Before I enter on other matters, I am desirous of apprising you of our sentiments respecting Buonaparte. If you should succeed in getting possession of his person, and the King of France does not feel himself sufficiently strong to bring him to justice as a rebel, we are ready to take upon ourselves the custody of his person on the part of the allied Powers, and, indeed, we should think it better that he should be assigned to us than to any other member of the confederacy. In this case, however, we should prefer that there were not commissioners appointed on the part of the other Powers, but that the discretion should be vested entirely in ourselves; and that we should be at liberty to fix the place of his confinement either in Great Britain, or at Gibraltar, Malta, St. Helena, the Cape of Good Hope, or any other colony we might think most secure.

We incline at present strongly to the opinion that the best place of custody would be at a distance from Europe, and that the Cape of Good Hope, or St. Helena, would be the most proper stations for the purpose.

If, however, we are to have the severe responsibility of such a charge, it is but just that we should have the choice of the place of confinement, and a complete discretion as to the means necessary to render that confinement effectual.

Believe me, yours, etc.,

Liverpool.

Unknown to both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, on the day that this letter was written Napoleon had surrendered. As soon as he heard the news, Liverpool expressed his views to Castlereagh.

*Secret and Confidential.*

Fife House,

July 20th, 1815.

My dear Castlereagh,

I have this moment received your letters of the 17th inst., with the intelligence of the surrender of Buonaparte, of which I wish you joy.

When your letter was written, you had evidently not read mine of the 15th, which will explain to you the sentiments of Government on the subject of his detention. We are all decidedly of opinion that it would not answer to confine him in this country. Very nice legal questions might arise upon the subject, which would be particularly embarrassing; but, independent of these considerations, you know enough of the feelings of people in this country not to doubt that he would become an object of curiosity immediately, and possibly of compassion in the course of a few

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months; and the very circumstances of his being here, or indeed anywhere else in Europe, would contribute to keep up a certain degree of ferment in France.

Since I wrote to you last, Lord Melville and myself have conversed with Mr. Borrow<sup>1</sup> on the subject, and he decidedly recommends St. Helena as the place in the world the best calculated for the confinement of such a person. There is a very fine citadel there in which he might reside; the situation is perfectly healthy; there is only one place in the circuit of the island where ships can anchor, and we have the power of excluding neutral vessels altogether, if we should think it necessary.

At such a distance, and in such a place, all intrigue would be impossible; and, being withdrawn so far from the European world, he would very soon be forgotten.

We are very much disinclined to the appointment of commissioners on the part of the other Powers. Such an arrangement might be unobjectionable for a few months, but when several persons of this description got together in a place in which they had nothing to do, and of which they would very soon be tired, they would be very likely to quarrel amongst themselves, and the existence of any disputes amongst them might seriously embarrass the safe custody of the prisoner.

To conclude: we wish that the King of France would hang or shoot Buonaparte, as the best termination of the business; but, if this is impossible, and the allies are desirous that we should have custody of him, it is not unreasonable that we should be allowed to judge of the means by which that custody can be made effectual.

Believe me to be, etc.,

Liverpool.

So Napoleon was sent to St. Helena, but in case any "very nice legal questions" did arise the government secured the passage of a Bill to authorize his detention in the island. It was passed without a single adverse vote in the Commons, and with only one, that of Lord Holland, in the Lords.

No sooner was Napoleon out of the way than the problem arose of the punishment that was to be inflicted upon France for her fresh act of aggression. "The prevailing idea in this country," Liverpool wrote to Castlereagh, "is that we are fairly entitled to avail ourselves of the present moment to take back from France the principal conquests of Louis XIV. It is argued, with much force, that France never will forgive the humiliation which she has already received, that she will take the first convenient opportunity of endeavouring to redeem her military

<sup>1</sup> Secretary to the Admiralty.

glory, and that it is our duty therefore to take advantage of the present moment to prevent the evil consequences which may even flow from the greatness of our own success. . . . The French nation is at the mercy of the allies in consequence of a war occasioned by their violation of the most sacred treaties: the allies are fully entitled, under those circumstances, to indemnity and security." Liverpool was rarely an advocate of extreme measures, but during a few weeks in the summer of 1815 he was clearly in favour of punishing France severely for the support she had given Napoleon during the Hundred Days. These views did not commend themselves to Castlereagh, who saw that any attempt to put them into operation would merely be to further the aggrandizement of Prussia. Nor was this all, for the humiliation of France would make impossible the position of Louis XVIII, who had now returned to his throne a second time, while it was becoming evident that although the French people had acquiesced in the return of Napoleon, only a small minority had actively espoused his cause.

So more moderate counsels prevailed, and the result was the second Treaty of Paris, which was signed on November 20th, 1815. By this France lost all the gains of the earlier arrangement, except Avignon and the Venaissin, and was reduced to the frontier of 1789. Chambéry and the part of Savoy previously ceded to France were restored to the King of Sardinia; the districts in the neighbourhood of Geneva were returned to that canton, and the fortress of Huningen on the frontiers of Switzerland was to be demolished; and various rectifications on the eastern and north-eastern borders were no longer sanctioned. Furthermore, a war indemnity of seven hundred million francs was exacted, and in addition France had to maintain for five years, at the cost of another quarter of a million francs, an army of occupation of 150,000 men in her principal fortresses. Finally, the victors, largely under pressure from the Regent, decided that the numerous pictures and works of art which had been collected in Paris from all parts of Europe during the wars of the Revolution and the Empire should be restored to their former owners. Such was the price which France had to pay for the luxury of the Hundred Days.

Meanwhile, although the Congress of Vienna had been interrupted by the return of Napoleon from Elba, it had not suspended its activities. The first general Act was signed on June 8th, and as the second Treaty of Paris was concluded in the middle of November, by the end of 1815 Europe was once more at peace.

The war had been won, and peace had been restored, but it was felt, in view of the Hundred Days, that the alliance which had defeated Napoleon should be kept in being in case he, or his relatives, or his fellow-countrymen gave any further trouble. Accordingly, on the same day that the second Treaty of Paris was signed, the principles laid down at Chaumont were solemnly reasserted in a Quadruple Alliance between Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. By this the contracting parties agreed to maintain the settlement reached with France; to come to the aid, with 60,000 men, of any of the signatories who might be attacked by the French, and "to renew their meetings at fixed periods, either under the immediate auspices of the sovereigns themselves, or by their respective ministers, for the purpose of consulting upon their common interests, and for the consideration of those measures which at each of those periods shall be considered the most salutary for the repose and prosperity of nations, and for the maintenance of the peace of Europe." These proposals were eminently sane, definite, and business-like, and the commitments under them were limited in scope. In short, they provided for collective security against any renewal of French aggression, and for the establishment of the Concert of Europe.

Nevertheless, this agreement did not go far enough for that incalculable figure, the Tsar, who had exchanged his devotion to Napoleon for a similar sentiment towards Barbe-Julie de Krüdener, and of it was born the Holy Alliance. The lady was the daughter of a Baltic Baron, and her career had been by no means devoid of amorous incidents, while her elderly husband is said to have found her repentances at least as trying as the infidelities which provoked them. Thenceforward, with the passage of the years, and a falling-off in the number of lovers, she became a Moravian, but this creed did not satisfy her for long, and she set up a religion of her own. She was by now convinced

that she was a woman with a mission, and she began to make prophecies. In short, Madame de Krüdener was the prototype of the movement-starting women of more recent times, but she was able to effect more than most of them because of her influential connections. In May 1815 she contrived to meet Alexander, and within a very short time she was exercising a dominant influence upon him.

It was certainly a curious friendship for the Tsar of All the Russias. Alexander persuaded Madame de Krüdener to accompany him to Paris after the fall of Napoleon, and on alternate nights from ten till two he prayed and read the Scriptures with her. When he arrived in the French capital with his middle-aged companion the assembled statesmen were mildly amused, and considered the whole affair as further evidence of the traditional Romanoff eccentricity; when, however, it was realized that the friendship was purely platonic there was general alarm at the possible consequences. Such alarm was more than justified, for if the old Alexander had been difficult, the new promised to be impossible. "Scold me well," said the Tsar to the evangelist, "by the grace of God I will carry out all your instructions." The upshot of this was the Holy Alliance, though the basic idea would seem to have been germinating in Alexander's mind for at least ten years.

The Tsar expounded his proposals to the Allies, and what then ensued is best described by Castlereagh in a letter to Liverpool, in the earlier part of which he refers to Madame de Krüdener as "an old fanatic, who has a considerable reputation amongst the few highflyers in religion that are to be found in Paris."

Prince Metternich, the following day, came to me with the *projet* of the treaty since signed. He communicated to me in great confidence the difficulty in which the Emperor of Austria felt himself placed; that he felt great repugnance to be a party to such an act, and yet was more apprehensive of refusing himself to the Emperor's application; that it was quite clear his mind was affected; that peace and good-will was at present the idea which engrossed his thoughts; that he had found him of late friendly and reasonable on all points; and that he was unwilling to thwart him in a conception which, however wild, might save him and the rest of the world much trouble so long as it should last. In short, seeing no retreat, after some verbal alterations, the Emperor of Austria agreed to sign it. The



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Emperor of Russia then carried it to the King of Prussia, who felt in the same manner, but came to the same conclusion.

As soon as the instrument was executed between the sovereigns, without the intervention of their ministers, the Emperor of Russia brought it to me, developed his whole plan of universal peace, and told me the three sovereigns had agreed to address a letter to the Prince Regent, to invite him to accede, of which intended letter his Imperial Majesty delivered to me the enclosed copy. The Duke of Wellington happened to be with me when the Emperor called, and it was not without difficulty that we went through the interview with becoming gravity.

Foreseeing the awkwardness of this piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense, especially to a British sovereign, I examined with Prince Metternich every practicable expedient to stop it; but the Emperor of Austria, with all his sobriety of mind, did not venture to risk it. When it reached me, in fact, the deed was done, and no other course remained than to do homage to the sentiment on which it was founded, and to the advantages Europe might hope to derive from three such powerful sovereigns directing all their influence to the preservation of peace; saying that I was confident the Prince Regent would unite *cœur et d'âme* with his august allies, in making this the basis of all his policy; and that I would lose no time in laying before his Royal Highness this solemn pledge of the pacific and moderate spirit which actuated their councils.

The text of the Holy Alliance was revised by Madame de Krüdener in person, and it was contained in a Declaration consisting of a preamble and three articles. The preamble stated that the Emperors of Russia and Austria, and the King of Prussia, had, in consequence of the events of the previous three years, acquired the intimate conviction of the necessity of conducting their mutual relations "according to the sublime truths contained in the eternal religion of Christ our Saviour," and they solemnly declared that this Declaration had no other object than to publish this fixed resolution in the face of the whole world. In the first article the three monarchs promised to consider each other as fellow-countrymen and to lend each other aid on all occasions; in the second they earnestly recommended their subjects to strengthen themselves daily in the principles and exercise of the duties which the Divine Saviour had taught to mankind; and in the third there was a general invitation to all the Powers to associate themselves with the project; the only exceptions being the Pope, with whom neither Alexander nor Frederick William desired to have any relations, and the Sultan of Turkey, to whom it was felt that

“the sublime truths contained in the eternal religion of Christ our Saviour” were not calculated to make any great appeal.

All the Continental Powers to whom invitations were sent agreed to co-operate, some with their tongues in their cheeks and others out of a desire not to offend the three powerful monarchs who were sponsoring the scheme. The Prince Regent, on the advice of Liverpool, replied regretfully that the provisions of the British Constitution would not allow him to accept, and from the beginning the Holy Alliance was regarded with disfavour both by Parliament and the public, for in those days the Englishman was a practical person who mistrusted vague generalities, above all in the field of foreign affairs. Nor was this all, for it was not easy for him to forget that the monarchs who now expressed such unimpeachable sentiments had only a few years before been fawning upon the tyrant of Europe while he alone had been battling for the cause of freedom. Castlereagh made the position perfectly clear:

We shall be found in our place when actual danger menaces the system of Europe, but this country cannot and will not act upon abstract and speculative principles of precaution. The alliance which exists had no such purpose in view of its original formation. It was never so explained to Parliament, and it would be a breach of faith to Parliament now to extend it.

Upon this principle the foreign policy of Great Britain continued to be based for many years.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

1815-1822

THE Britain which emerged from the long struggle with France was a very different country from that which had entered the war twenty-two years before. She was far more industrialized, and this change had produced problems of an economic and social nature which called for solution: furthermore, the external danger to which the nation had for so long been exposed had had the effect of postponing reform. Thus there was at the same time an ugly feeling, especially in the industrial areas, and a tendency in other quarters to regard any concession as dangerous. We have already seen that even while hostilities were in progress there was widespread discontent, and with the coming of peace this was intensified. In effect, Liverpool and his colleagues were confronted with a very delicate situation indeed, and their task was not rendered any easier by the absence of all precedents to guide them, a fact which their critics have tended to ignore.

In these circumstances it was hardly surprising that with the arrival of peace many chickens, some of them singularly ill-omened birds, should have come home to roost. The years which immediately followed the war were marked by acute distress and by a general feeling of insecurity. The golden age to which many had looked forward seemed as remote as ever, and the resulting disillusionment was bitter. As always on such occasions, the desire for reform was confused with incitement to revolution, and alarm spread rapidly among all who had anything to lose. Political power still rested in the hands of the great landowners and of those country gentlemen who appear in the pages of Jane Austen: such men wanted a period of calm

after the disturbances of the previous twenty years, and they had no sympathy with those who wished to take advantage of the coming of peace to effect sweeping changes in the Constitution. Nor was this all, for any advocate of reform was under suspicion: it was not forgotten that the French Revolution had had relatively modest beginnings, and the attitude of those in authority most unnaturally was that if the reformers were given an inch they would take an ell. Therefore they hardened their hearts against all concessions, thereby very nearly precipitating the crisis which they wished to avoid. Five years after Waterloo that shrewd old man, Louis XVIII, by then firmly seated on his throne, was writing to his ambassador in London that the progress of events in Britain formed a close parallel with what had happened in France thirty-one years before.<sup>1</sup>

For everything that went wrong in the immediate post-war period Liverpool was posthumously to incur the formidable displeasure of Disraeli, who did his best to hand him down to posterity deprived of every shred of reputation for statesmanship. The unfortunate Prime Minister was satirized as the "Arch-Mediocrity," and sneering references were made to his "meagre diligence." The government "fell into a panic," Disraeli declared, "having fulfilled during their lives the duties of administration, they were frightened because they were called upon, for the first time, to perform the functions of government. Like all weak men, they had recourse to what they called strong measures. They determined to put down the multitude. They thought they were imitating Mr. Pitt, because they mistook disorganization for sedition."<sup>2</sup> Disraeli himself, it may be remarked, never had to deal with problems of anything like the magnitude of those which confronted the man whom he thus abused. The poets were even more bitter; Byron loaded the Foreign Secretary in particular with abuse, and Shelley

... met Murder on the way—  
He had a mask like Castlereagh.

Yet, as has been suggested on an earlier page, there was another side to the picture, and no man who was the in-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Daudet, E., *L'Ambassade du Duc Decazes en Angleterre*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Coningsby*, bk. II, ch. 1.

competent functionary depicted by Disraeli could have controlled a team which, in his later days, contained such personalities as Canning, Eldon, Huskisson, Peel, Palmerston, and, above all, Wellington; besides these names the members of Disraeli's own ministries appear dwarfs indeed. Rather, surely, must one agree with Mr. Keith Feiling that "this over-worked Prime Minister has been pilloried long enough for the faults of millowners and justices; for severities in which he was overborne by Eldon, for omissions which he shared with Peel."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Brock has gone even further: "Men will not suffer for long the leadership of a man who is no more than an amiable party manager, and the backing of authority must be sound principles and solid ideas. . . . Sound judgment was one of his principal qualifications for high office, and it was this which could take him out of the politician and make him a statesman."<sup>2</sup>

What the critics of a later generation, who had not themselves been called upon to deal with the aftermath of a great war, were inclined to forget was that the ministers had been one of the prime factors in the overthrow of Napoleon, and they would have been more than human if they had not thought this entitled them to control their country's destinies during the years of peace which followed the victory. Furthermore, the vast majority of the electorate took the same view, and whatever posterity may think of Sidmouth and his Six Acts, he and his colleagues continued to be returned to power at successive elections. Whatever may be said for or against the repressive measures of that time on grounds of ethics or expediency, they were what the voters wanted. Nor was the government "called upon to deal merely with merry peasants and innocuous idealists,"<sup>3</sup> for there were desperate schemes afoot in some quarters. The men who organized the Cato Street Conspiracy, and the rising that ended at Bannymuir, were dangerous revolutionaries against whom the use of force was inevitable.

The government undoubtedly made a mistake in not discriminating more carefully between the different classes of reformers, but their fault was the same as that of every adminis-

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches in Nineteenth Century Biography*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Feiling, K., *Sketches in Nineteenth Century Biography*, p. 27.

tration in similar circumstances: Pitt had been no wiser, and the history of our own age abounds in instances of panic-stricken measures being adopted towards those suspected of harbouring designs inimical to the safety of the State. Liverpool had witnessed the storming of the Bastille with his own eyes, and he and his colleagues had at any rate the excuse that they had seen in France the effect of looking on helplessly while the agitation grew. The government might, too, have pursued a different policy had they received any support in the matter from the Opposition, but although in private the Whigs might deplore the more violent excesses of the Radicals, in public they did nothing to discourage, and much to stimulate, them. It must also be remembered that there was still no effective police force, and that a minor disturbance could easily assume dangerous proportions before it was checked.

The year 1816 saw the beginning of the trouble. During its course the price of wheat rose from 52s. 6d. a quarter to 103s. 1d., and by the middle of the following year it had reached 111s. 6d. In May 1816 there was rioting in the counties of Cambridge, Essex, and Suffolk; and at Littleport, in Cambridgeshire, the troops were compelled to open fire: two of the rioters were killed, and five were subsequently executed. Rick-burning began in many districts, and there was a distinct revival of Luddism. There can be little doubt that the influence of Cobbett, exerted through *The Weekly Register*, had much to do with fanning the flames of revolt, though it must be admitted that Cobbett himself never advocated recourse to actual violence, and some of his opinions were definitely Tory in character. Yet his plea for sweeping reforms reached the ears of many who were none too scrupulous as to the means by which they might be attained. All over the country there were revolutionary clubs which demanded universal suffrage and annual Parliaments. Before the end of the year the spirit of discontent had spread to London, where a rising took place with the seizure of the Tower for its object: it failed owing to the personal courage of the Lord Mayor, but not until some blood had been spilt. In the following January the Regent was insulted in the streets on his return from the opening of Parliament.

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In face of agitation of this nature it behoved Liverpool to strengthen his by no means impressive Cabinet, and his first step was to offer a place in it to Canning. Two years before, when Canning had accepted the Lisbon embassy, it had been agreed that he should have the reversion of the next vacancy, and it was in many ways extremely fortunate that this should have been the Board of Control, for the holder of this particular office could hardly put forward a claim to the leadership of the House of Commons, which had proved a stumbling-block on previous occasions.

*Private.*

Fife House,  
February 13th, 1816.

My dear Canning,

The precarious state of Lord Bucks' health must have been known to you for some time, and the event of his death will probably have reached you before you receive this letter. I should indeed have written to you last week, if the necessity of a previous communication with the Prince Regent, and his absence from London, had not obliged me to defer it till after the Lisbon packet had sailed.

I have constantly borne in my mind, I can assure you, the explanation which you gave me of your own views a few days before you quitted England, and I am now enabled to propose to you, with the full approbation of the Prince Regent, and the concurrence of all my colleagues, the office and situation in the Cabinet which was held by Lord Bucks.

I have no means of judging how far this particular office may be acceptable to you. In the year 1813 you were willing to have taken the Admiralty, and I have endeavoured in consequence to ascertain whether Lord Melville was disposed now to make the exchange to which he then consented. I found, however, that he is on many accounts so indisposed to quit his present situation that I should not consider myself justified in calling upon him to make a sacrifice which I really believe at this time would be most repugnant to his feelings.

I have no alternative, therefore, but to propose to you the vacant office, such as it is, and to add that, if it meets in any degree your wishes, we shall be very happy to have you amongst us.

If your decision would be to accept, I shall be obliged to you to let me have the earliest information of it, even though your return to England should be delayed for a few weeks. Your project of paying a visit to Gibraltar would in this case I suppose fall to the ground.

Our session has begun prosperously, and there is no appearance of any formidable opposition except upon questions of economy and taxation.

The present distress of the agricultural interest must be expected to affect

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some of our friends on the question of the continuance of the property tax; they are likewise very desirous of getting rid of the malt tax, and several other duties which are supposed to press upon agriculture, but which can be very ill spared in the present state of our finances. I am satisfied likewise that those who raise this clamour have a narrow view of their own interest, as the restoration of public credit, the run of the funds, and the consequent fall of the interest on money will afford more relief to the existing distress of the country than any other measure of relief that could be adopted.

This notion is fortunately gaining ground, and I trust, therefore, we shall carry the measure we intend to propose with some slight modifications. At all events, the great struggle on those questions will be over before Easter.

Believe me, etc.,

Liverpool.

Canning's reply showed that he had learnt his lesson.

Torres Vedras,

March 8th, 1816.

My dear Liverpool,

Your letter of the 13th ult. was a long time on its way to Lisbon, where it arrived (in company with letters and newspapers of the 23d) only on Saturday last, the day after the sailing of the packet for England.

I have received it upon an excursion into the country. I write upon the road, and send my letter to Lisbon to be in time for the packet of to-morrow. I will not trouble you with the course of my reflections on the subject of your letter: the result of them is that I accept your proposal. If I have doubted about it, I wish you to understand that my doubts have been as to taking office at all at the present moment, and not in any degree as to the particular office proposed to me.

You know how little I have wished that you should make any effort, or rather how sincerely I have desired that you should *not* make any, or *create* an opening for any such proposal. For many reasons it would have been infinitely more agreeable to me that no such opening should have occurred for some time to come. You will give me credit for regretting the event in which this has originated; but the offer to me having been produced in a manner thus unwished for and uncontrived, it may be a satisfaction to you to learn that you could not by any arrangement have vacated a situation more agreeable to me.

I am not the less obliged to you for recollecting what passed on a former occasion respecting the Admiralty, but I should indeed have been sorry that Lord Melville had been urged to a change "repugnant to his feelings," when, if the two offices were submitted to my option, my preference would, under present circumstances, be decidedly for the Board of Control.

As to my return to England, I fear it cannot be much accelerated. My first move, the embarkation of my family, necessarily depends upon the



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weather; and in France I may possibly be detained rather longer than I should have thought necessary, when I could reckon upon returning there at my own time, and for as long as I pleased. I will interpose no avoidable delay.

In reporting to the Prince Regent my answer to the proposal made to me with his Royal Highness's authority and gracious approbation, I request that you will express to his Royal Highness, in the most dutiful terms, my deep sense of his unvarying goodness towards me, and my entire devotion to his service.

Return, on my behalf, to your colleagues, my acknowledgments for their expression of good will, and believe me ever,

My dear Liverpool,

Very sincerely yours,

George Canning.

Although Canning's acceptance of a seat in the Cabinet undoubtedly strengthened the government both in the House of Commons and in the country, it could not fail to give rise to a certain amount of malicious comment in some circles. At the end of December 1816, for example, when Sidmouth was about to propose the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, W. H. Lyttelton<sup>1</sup> wrote to Bagot, "Everybody agrees that the Doctor has done his part well. . . . By the By, Canning is now very intimate with this self-same Doctor, which gives one a strange notion of the shortness of their memories, or excellence of their tempers. We are, however, not without our hopes that your old friend is collecting fresh material for epigrams, and is reconnoitring in disguise." Lyttelton was, however, mistaken, for Canning's support of Sidmouth was perfectly genuine. In spite of his sympathy with all attempts to secure Roman Catholic Emancipation, he wished to preserve the established order, and, like Liverpool himself, he opposed Parliamentary Reform as tending to upset the delicate balance of the Constitution. The founder of *The Anti-Jacobin* was hardly likely to view with favour the agitators who were urging the working classes to burn ricks and to wreck machinery, and the attempts that have been made to dissociate Canning from the domestic policy of the Liverpool administration are based upon a complete misconception of his character. He was very far from being a politician of the sentimental type who believes in the

<sup>1</sup> Later the third Lord Lyttelton.

divinity of discontent and objects to the use of force in any circumstances. He certainly wished to remove all real grievances, which some of his colleagues did not, but he had no hesitation in giving his support to the enforcement of order. Above all, if Canning had not agreed with the policy of the government he was the last man in the world to have consented to fill the vacancy at the Board of Control.

Liverpool soon had proof of the restlessness of his own supporters over the property tax, for in March it was thrown out by the Commons by a majority of 238 to 201. The debate had been, it must be admitted, badly handled by ministers, and an unfortunate remark by Castlereagh about "an ignorant impatience to be relieved from the pressure of taxation" had annoyed the House. The Regent at this time was at Brighton with gout, and a letter which Liverpool wrote to Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, the Prince's private secretary, shows the difficulties in which the administration found itself during the early months of 1816.

*Secret.*

Fife House,

March 21st, 1816.

My dear Sir,

I received your letter by the post this morning. If the marriage<sup>1</sup> cannot take place on the 4th, it had better at once be fixed for the Tuesday or Thursday in Easter week. Those persons who are expected to attend it must have some time to prepare their dresses. The uncertainty which now prevails respecting it is very inconvenient to many.

I come now to a matter of more importance.

The proceeding last night in the House of Commons was most unpleasant. A direct vote of censure upon the Government was rejected by a majority of only twenty-nine; and as I am well informed, if it had not been for Brougham's speech, which was little short of treason, and created a universal disgust amongst all parties, we should probably have been left in a minority.

It becomes necessary, therefore, for me to convey to his Royal Highness the information that the Government certainly hangs by a thread; that the victory which has been obtained against us on the property tax, and the determination since taken of conceding the loan malt tax, has not had the least effect in conciliating those who have deserted us; and that the spirit of the House of Commons is as bad now as at any period of the present session, or indeed as at any time within my recollection.

<sup>1</sup> Of Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg.

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Under these circumstances, both Lord Castlereagh and myself are of opinion that it is of the utmost importance that the Prince Regent should come to town the very first moment he can do it without risk.

The country is indeed in a state in which his ministers ought to have the opportunity of daily, and even hourly, access to him. Decisions which ought not to be taken without his Royal Highness's concurrence must, at times like these, often be taken without the possibility of the delay which would arise in consequence of a communication between London and Brighton. . . .

I must beg of you to submit all these observations to his Royal Highness's most anxious consideration, and I am sure he will see the necessity of coming to town as soon as he can bear the motion of a carriage.

I would only further add, on the subject of the marriage, that I think there would be many objections to the fixing it on the 5th or 6th: the 5th is a Friday, and a day consequently on which marriages do not usually take place in Lent. The 6th is a Saturday, and the day immediately before Passion Week. If it cannot be fixed therefore on Thursday, the 4th, it had better be put off till Easter week.

Believe me, etc.,

Liverpool.

The Regent's reply did him credit.

Pavilion, Brighton,

*March 24th, 1816.*

My dear Liverpool,

I will not suffer Arbuthnot to return to you without being the bearer of a line in my own handwriting, briefly to thank you and your colleagues for all your principles, and firm and steady feelings towards me during the present storm which rages, and which I both hope and believe, ere it be very long, must and will subside, and you may depend upon my most resolute, firm, and persevering support to the very utmost. You have seen me before pretty highly tried, and you shall find me now, as at all other times, true to the backbone. Arbuthnot will enter into all other matters.

Always most sincerely and affectionately yours,

George P.R.

Contrary, apparently, to their own expectation, Liverpool and his colleagues proved able to ride out the Parliamentary storm, though they were careful, in view of the delicacy of their position in the House of Commons, not to introduce any controversial legislation. Indeed, during the latter part of the session no question of importance came before Parliament except the Bill for postponing until the summer of 1818 the obligation of the Bank to resume cash payments, the return to which had originally been fixed at six months after the conclusion of the war.

From Ireland the news was far from reassuring, and the condition of that country was a cause of the deepest anxiety to the government, as well it might be. The Union had merely rendered the situation worse, and in addition to the economic distress there was the growing resentment against the payment of tithes by a predominately Catholic population to an established Protestant Church. Signs were, however, not wanting that Liverpool was beginning to realize that the Irish Question was not so simple as he had previously supposed, and during the course of a debate he declared that "he was willing to admit that the system of government originally established for Ireland, and which had long prevailed, had been radically defective and vicious." Nor was this all, for he expressed the opinion that "though the right to tithes stood on the same footing in Ireland as in England, yet, under the peculiar circumstances of the former country, it might not be unfair nor inexpedient to consider whether there some commutation of the tithe might not be devised." Finally, he ascribed much of the distress in Ireland to "the non-residence of persons of fortune."

In June he received a letter from Peel calling attention to another aspect of the Irish problem.

Irish Office,

*June 24th, 1816.*

Dear Lord Liverpool,

I think I should be chargeable with a great omission of duty if I did not, previously to my departure from this country to Ireland, call your attention to the great and increasing extent of emigration from Ireland to the United States of America.

If emigration was confined to the south of Ireland, where the population is so dense and disproportionate to the means of employing it, I should consider it a benefit to the country. As tending to increase the population of the United States, it might possibly operate to the prejudice of British interests; but, so far as Ireland is concerned, I do not think she would suffer at all by an emigration from the south of ten times the extent of that which at present takes place.

But, unfortunately, the northern inhabitants are the most disposed to emigrate. I had this day a letter from Lord Whitworth,<sup>1</sup> which states that on the last Council-day there were upwards of 700 applications from the north of Ireland for permission to leave it, in almost all cases for the United

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

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States. At the preceding Council there were, I believe, about 680, and a Council is generally held in Ireland once a week. I think this diminution of the Protestant population of Ireland very unfortunate; but I think it still more unfortunate that not only this country should lose so many industrious and valuable inhabitants (valuable peculiarly as residents in Ireland), but that the United States should reap the advantage from their departure.

It may be impossible to prevent emigration, but it seems to me to be not impossible to secure to one part of the empire the benefit which is resigned by another, and by holding out ample encouragement to settle in the Canadas, or other parts of our North American possessions, to contribute to their future strength and resources.

However this encouragement can be best afforded I must leave to others to determine. I know it cannot be afforded without considerable expense; but I much doubt whether the saving of that expense at present (necessary as all savings now are) will prove true economy in the end.

Believe me, dear Lord Liverpool,

Yours most truly,

Robert Peel.

As the summer drew to its close even the turf was spoiled by the heavy rains, and so a shortage of fuel was added to the other miseries of Ireland; it was thus little wonder that Peel saw no prospect but that of "calamities for which it was impossible to suggest a remedy." So far as England was concerned, Liverpool, in his reply, was slightly more optimistic, for he wrote: "Our prospects on this side of the water are rather improving; but there continues to exist a very bad spirit in the country; and I fear we must look forward to a stormy and troublesome session."

The year 1817 began badly enough with the insult to the Prince Regent. As he was returning from the opening of Parliament on January 25th the windows of his carriage were pierced by two bullets, believed to have been fired from an air-gun, and other windows were broken by showers of stones. These events, combined with the general unrest which was everywhere manifesting itself, not unnaturally alarmed the majority at Westminster, and thereby strengthened the position of the government in both Houses. In consequence, a Bill was introduced for the suppression of seditious meetings, and the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended until July 1st. Nor was this all, for Sidmouth sent a circular letter to the Lords Lieutenant of the

counties for the information of the magistrates in which he said that, in the opinion of the Law Officers, persons charged on oath with seditious libel might be apprehended and held to bail. For this he was violently attacked, and his critics declared that it was unbecoming for the Home Secretary to interpret the law, while Cobbett, feeling himself at the mercy of informers, fled to the United States. All the same, those accused were, as in Pitt's time, put on their trial, and one of the most notorious, Hone, was three times acquitted on the charge of uttering blasphemous libels. Men were not yet imprisoned in England for their political opinions without being given a chance of clearing themselves before a jury of their fellow-countrymen. The Midlands and North still remained disturbed, and the so-called march of the Blanketeers took place in Manchester; while in Nottinghamshire a formidable gang armed with pikes terrorized several districts before it was dispersed by the troops. The suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act was then extended for a further period of six months.

From many quarters Liverpool was urged to take measures of even greater severity, and among those who communicated with him on this subject were Coleridge and Southey, who had long since abjured the deities of their revolutionary youth. On the letter from Coleridge the Prime Minister noted: "From Mr. Coleridge, stating the object of his writings has been to rescue speculative philosophy from false principles of reasoning, and to place it on that basis, or give it that tendency, which would make it best suited to the interests of religion as well as of the State; at least I believe this is Mr. Coleridge's meaning, but I cannot well understand him." Those who have read the letter<sup>1</sup> in question will agree with Liverpool.

In the autumn there came the unexpected blow of the death of Princess Charlotte in childbirth. Only a few days earlier Liverpool had received a letter from Prince Leopold in which the husband said, "*La santé de Charlotte est, Dieu merci, très bonne,*" but on November 5th she died. Liverpool's feelings, both as a man and a statesman, may be gauged from an extract from a letter which he wrote to Peel on the 10th.

<sup>1</sup> Both it and Southey's are reproduced in full in Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. II, pp. 298-307.

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You would certainly have heard from me at once on the subject of your letter of the 31st ult., if the severe calamity which we have all sustained had not for a time prevented me from thinking of anything which was not immediately connected with it. I have no doubt that this sad event will produce as deep an impression amongst the loyal and well disposed in Ireland as it has done amongst all classes of people in this country: indeed, there never was an occurrence more calculated to excite every feeling, private and public. I never knew an individual in his station more respected than Prince Leopold, and it is painful to reflect on the change which he experienced in all his prospects, in the course of a few sad hours.

The public consequences of this event must become a subject of the greatest anxiety. If it had pleased God to have spared either the mother or the child, we should have had something on which to have fixed our hopes and expectations; but as it is we are thrown quite out to sea, and there is no expedient to which we can look with real satisfaction.

It was only natural that Liverpool in his official capacity should have been impressed with the grave situation which had arisen in consequence of the death of the young Princess, for at that moment none of the King's sons had any legitimate family, and it looked as if the eventual successor to the throne would have to be found in some foreign prince.

The following year, 1818, witnessed a temporary improvement in the economic condition of the country and a consequent diminution in the amount of unrest, but before it closed, a strike of cotton operatives in Manchester was marked by the usual incidents of brutal violence towards those who refused to participate in it, and the military were compelled to open fire. Liverpool, however, was not content with mere repression, and when Sir Robert Peel, the father of the Chief Secretary for Ireland, brought in a Bill designed to regulate and restrict the employment of children in cotton factories, it had no more enthusiastic supporter than the Prime Minister. All the same, the Treasury Bench was woefully weak. Castlereagh was not only a poor speaker, but he was naturally mainly occupied with his work at the Foreign Office. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was quite ineffective in debate; Huskisson confined his activities to those subjects of which he had special knowledge; while Peel and Palmerston, although men of great promise, did not yet carry the weight of the older ministers. In these circumstances the chief spokesman for the government in the Lower House was Canning, and his task would have been more onerous still

had not the Opposition been so divided that it was only rarely their leader, Tierney, could persuade them to combine for a frontal attack on the ministry.

More important this year was the progress of events abroad, for a notable step was taken in the final liquidation of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars by the evacuation of French territory on the part of the Allied army of occupation. The recovery of France had been rapid, for the fact is that Louis XVIII was a far shrewder and more capable ruler than either contemporaries, including Liverpool, or posterity, excluding Gambetta, have been prepared to admit, and in Baron Louis he had an extremely competent Minister of Finance. Liverpool seems to have been more distrustful of the stability of the régime than were some of his colleagues, possibly on account of the ease with which Napoleon had re-established himself on the throne after his return from Elba, and he was extremely annoyed when an attempt was made in February to murder Wellington while he was paying an official visit to Paris. Not long after this he wrote that "in the present irritated state of the public mind" in the capital, "occasioned as it has been by some false measures on the part of the Government, and by the absurd conduct of the ultra-Royalists, he could never consider France as secure against some dreadful internal convulsion."

In June the British government received a suggestion from Vienna that there should be a meeting of the Allies to take into consideration the state of France, and particularly to discuss whether it was any longer necessary to retain an army of occupation in that country. Accordingly the signatories of the Quadruple Alliance decided to send representatives to Aix-la-Chapelle in September; and to render agreement easier it was arranged that there should be no other item on the agenda than the liquidation of the Second Treaty of Paris.

The position was that France had paid off eight instalments of the indemnity, that is to say 368,000,000 francs, and there were still another 332,000,000 to be paid, but she had until the end of November 1820 to do this without being called upon for interest. The Duke of Richelieu, the French Prime Minister, now offered to clear off the rest of the indemnity by paying a



sum of 265,000,000 francs. Of this, 100,000,000 francs were to be in the form of Rentes inscribed in the Great Book of the Public Debt of France, while interest was to be paid as from September 22nd, 1818: the remaining 165,000,000 francs were to be paid in nine (a figure which was subsequently changed to twelve) instalments through the agency of two English financial houses, Messrs. Hope and Messrs. Baring. In return, the army of occupation was to be withdrawn from French territory by November 30th, though the government of Louis XVIII was prepared to continue to provide for its pay, equipment, and clothing until that date. This offer was accepted by the Allies, and it was embodied in a treaty signed at Aix-la-Chapelle on October 8th, 1818, between Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia on the one part, and France on the other. This treaty was followed by a collective note addressed by the four Allied Powers to France stating that "they regard this solemn act as the final completion of the General Peace," and they ended by inviting His Most Christian Majesty "to unite henceforth his councils and his efforts" to theirs in the interests of mankind and of France. This invitation was, needless to say, at once accepted by the French government.

The Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle was thus highly successful. The Allied Powers finally liquidated the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars only three years after their termination; they settled all claims against their late enemy; and they admitted her as an equal to the Concert of Europe, which henceforth consisted not of four Great Powers but of five. It is true that as a purely precautionary measure the Allies secretly renewed among themselves the old Quadruple Alliance, but it remained a dead letter, and France soon asserted her influence on the same footing as that of the other Great Powers.

It was well for Liverpool that at any rate one complication should come to an end in this way, for he was about to encounter three of the most difficult years through which it has fallen to the lot of any British Prime Minister to control the destinies of the nation. The really serious trouble may be said to have begun in Manchester in the month of August 1819. A monster reform meeting had been convened for the 16th, and the magistrates very foolishly decided to arrest the ringleaders

in the middle of the demonstration. The force at their disposal consisted of several companies of infantry, six troops of the 15th Hussars, and a body of Yeomanry, as well as a number of special constables. When the moment for action came the Chief Constable declared that he could not effect the necessary arrests without the aid of the military, and a detachment of Yeomanry was ordered to advance, only, however, soon to be isolated in the middle of a surging crowd. At this point one of the magistrates, who thought that the Yeomen were in danger, asked the officer in command of the Hussars to rescue them, and to disperse the mob. Four troops of Hussars, and a few of the remaining Yeomanry, thereupon charged, and people fled in all directions. Some of the demonstrators were cut down, and others were ridden over, but the talk of "several mounds of human beings" lying where they had fallen was mere political propaganda. In actual fact the loss of life did not exceed five or six, and there were a number of injured. Such was the famous Peterloo Massacre. It did much to aggravate panic in one quarter, and resentment against the existing order in another, but the responsibility must rest with the local authorities, who lost their heads at the critical moment.

Some paragraphs from a long letter which Liverpool wrote on September 23rd to Canning, who was abroad at the time, will serve to give his views on the situation as he saw it.

The accounts of the proceedings at Manchester will of course have reached you, and will probably have in some degree alarmed you. To enable you to judge, however, fairly of the actual state of things, I must begin with acquainting you that, if certain manufacturing districts are excepted, that is, Lancashire, part of Cheshire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, some parts of the central counties which are contiguous, and likewise Glasgow and Paisley and their neighbourhood, I have never known the country in general, since the conclusion of the war, and I believe I might say since I have been in Parliament, in a more prosperous situation. I include in this statement the metropolis, where the reformers have been able to do nothing because they have no distress nor practical grievance to work upon.

The harvest, taking in the produce of the earth of all descriptions, has been most productive; the great complaint has been the want of hands to get it in.

Poor rates in many parts of the country are falling; crimes diminishing. In the metropolis and its neighbourhood there has been a diminution of one-third in the number of offenders since last year. This favourable state-

ment may be applied likewise to many of the manufacturing districts; to Warwickshire, to Staffordshire, and to the iron works in Wales.

But I must now reverse the picture; and I must say that nothing can be worse or more alarming than the state of those parts of the country which I first excepted.

You will naturally ask whether the proceedings of the magistrates at Manchester on the 16th were really justifiable? To this I answer, in the first instance, that all the papers on which they proceeded were laid before the Chancellor, and the Attorney and Solicitor-General, and that they were fully satisfied that the meeting was of a character and description, and assembled under such circumstances, as justified the magistrates in dispersing it by force.

You will have seen in the public papers that the grand jury of Lancashire have in a degree sanctioned their opinion by throwing out the bills against the Yeomanry, and by finding the bill against Hunt and his accomplices.

You will have seen, likewise, the resolutions of the grand jury of the county of Chester, but I send you with this a document which has not yet been made public, the report of the grand jury of the county of Lancaster to the Lord Lieutenant and Secretary of State. It is a most important document; it is signed, as you will observe, by Lord Stanley, and goes certainly to establish that parts of that county have been in a state little short, if at all, of actual rebellion.

When I say that the proceedings of the magistrates at Manchester on the 16th ult. were justifiable, you will understand me as not by any means deciding that the course which they pursued on that occasion was in all its parts prudent. A great deal might be said in their favour even on this head; but, whatever judgment might be formed in this respect, being satisfied that they were substantially right, there remained no alternative but to support them; and I am sorry to say that, notwithstanding the support which they have received, there prevails such a panic throughout that part of the country that it is difficult to get either magistrates to act or witnesses to come forward to give evidence, and that many of the lower orders who were supposed loyal have joined the disaffected, partly from fear, and partly from a conviction that some great change was at hand.

There was not to have been an autumn session, and in his letter to Canning the Prime Minister said that after consulting such of the Cabinet as were within reach he saw no necessity for a meeting of Parliament, but circumstances soon forced his hand. On October 10th he wrote to Canning again to say that Parliament had been called for November 23rd, and asking his colleague to arrange to be back in England a few days before that date. "We are now considering," he went on, "with the assistance of the law officers, what measures can be adopted for counteracting the evils and dangers which have unfortun-

ately grown out of the spirit too prevalent in the present times. This is a subject of immense difficulty, and one upon which we should all be most anxious for your assistance. Even Lord Erskine and Mr. Brougham have declared (the last in his speech in Westmorland, and the former in a new edition of the *Defence of the Whigs*) that meetings of the description of those which have recently taken place in Lancashire and Yorkshire ought if possible to be prevented."

The result was that, after strenuous opposition, the Six Acts were passed. In retrospect they do not appear very oppressive, and a later age must find it difficult to understand why they caused so much excitement among contemporaries. Two of them, against illegal and military training and the traversing of indictments, have since become part of the ordinary law. One, which enabled magistrates in certain localities to search for arms, was only in force for two years; another, aimed at blasphemous and seditious libels, was a dead letter as far as its penalties were concerned, though the slightest acquaintance with the political literature of the day affords proof that it was needed; another was at least equitable, for it submitted the cheap pamphlet Press to the duty already paid by newspapers. Indeed, the only one of the Six Acts which can be said to have been really drastic was that which forbade public meetings unless convoked by five justices of the peace, but this only continued in force for five years. The government may have been at fault in confusing legitimate grievances with Jacobinism, but its behaviour was surely no more culpable than that of the numerous agitators who endeavoured to exploit the prevailing misery for their own ends.

In defending the government's proposals Liverpool reminded the House of Lords that he had himself been an eye-witness of the opening scenes of the French Revolution, when a little firmness would have prevented that great catastrophe. As for the existing situation at home, "The number, indeed, of the disaffected was small as compared with the great aggregate of the people. But their activity was very great, and he was aware of the speed with which they diffused the poison of sedition from one district to another. And it was equally undeniable that in other countries where revolutions had taken place they

had been brought about, not by the number of the disaffected, not by the sedition which they excited, not by the falsehoods which they insinuated, but by the terror of the whole community; terror had been the unfailing engine with which they had effected their mighty mischiefs; and no one could have examined the evidence of what had taken place, and say that there was not a design on the part of many individuals by terror or force to shake the constitution of the country." In the House of Commons it is to be noted that the Opposition never divided more than 150 strong against these measures.

In the early weeks of 1820 the unrest culminated in the Cato Street Conspiracy. Its author was one Arthur Thistlewood, and his plan was to murder the assembled Cabinet in a private house, after which a Provisional Government was to have been proclaimed, while to increase the confusion fires were to be started in different parts of London. The scheme might well have succeeded had it not been detected by the aid of an informer. What actually happened was that twenty-four conspirators armed themselves in Cato Street, near Edgware Road, for the purpose of assassinating the ministers as they sat at dinner in Lord Harrowby's house in Grosvenor Square, while some of their associates were posted near the door of that house to summon them when all the guests were assembled. As a result of the information which had been given, the dinner was not held, but the watchers were deceived by the arrival of carriages for a party next door, and thus failed to warn their fellow-conspirators in Cato Street. The plans of the authorities, too, miscarried, for the troops did not arrive in time, as the officer in command did not know the district, and no one had thought to provide him with a map; in consequence Thistlewood and a good many of his men escaped, though he himself was captured the next morning. In the following April an outbreak in Scotland was put down without much difficulty at Bonnymuir, though not before a treasonable proclamation had spread consternation in Glasgow; and the whole affair bore such a resemblance to the Cato Street Conspiracy as to increase the alarm which that attempt had aroused.

In addition, however, to the economic and social condition of the country, Liverpool and his colleagues were much

concerned with its financial state. In 1819 a committee was appointed to consider the national finances, and Peel was chosen as its chairman. In consequence of its recommendations the gold standard was restored, though it was not thought prudent, in spite of the earlier decision to the contrary, to fix an earlier date than 1823 for the actual resumption of cash payments: in actual fact the directors of the Bank of England anticipated this date, and the exchange of notes for specie began on May 1st, 1821.

Meanwhile, a storm was brewing in another quarter which had already been the source of more than one tempest in Liverpool's official life, namely the Royal Family. George III died on January 29th, 1820, but he had for so long been in seclusion that there appeared to be no valid reason why his death should make the slightest difference to the political life of the country. As the law then stood, a General Election had to be held, but the government once again emerged successful from the polls. Indeed, there is no reason to suppose that the accession of George IV, unpopular though he was, would have caused any great excitement in any quarter but for the action of his wife, who, in June, insisted on returning to England, and thereby precipitated a crisis which very nearly resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy itself. As we have seen, neither the new King nor his consort had anything approaching clean hands where the other was concerned, but they were not private citizens, and the government had to take the nation's interests into account. These were well served by Caroline's absence on the Continent. Whether she would in any case have stayed there after her husband's succession to the throne is a moot point, but the omission of her name from the Liturgy drove her to fury, and she determined to return to England to secure what she claimed to be her rights. In the main this somewhat sordid story belongs to the history of England rather than to the biography of Liverpool, but some account of it must be given as illustrative of the difficulties which he was called upon to face—difficulties almost unparalleled in the experience of any other British Prime Minister.

The situation was from the beginning complicated by the fact of the very indiscreet nature of Caroline's behaviour

abroad. In particular, she had raised an Italian courier of the name of Bergami to the office of her chamberlain, and it was widely believed that her relations with him were of an adulterous nature. In these circumstances the King began to press upon the Cabinet the advisability of securing a divorce, and all through the early weeks of 1820 there was a lively exchange of letters and memoranda between him and Liverpool, who was most reluctant to adopt extreme measures of any sort. His views were well expressed in three paragraphs from a long Cabinet minute which was submitted to the King in the middle of February.

First, If your Majesty and the Princess were in the situation of private individuals, it may be assumed as certain that a divorce could not possibly be obtained.

Secondly, A bill of divorce could therefore in this case be proposed only on the paramount consideration of a *great public interest*.

Thirdly, But, in the judgment of your Majesty's servants, the proposition of a bill of divorce would under all the circumstances produce public evils and inconveniences far over-balancing any public advantage which could be expected to be derived from that measure.

In the middle of these discussions Liverpool received the following letter from Caroline herself.

Rome,  
the 16th of March, 1820.

The Queen of this Realm wishes to be informed through the medium of Lord Liverpool, First Minister to the King of this Realm, for which reason or motive the Queen name has been left out of the general Prayer-books in England, and especially to prevent all her subjects to pay her such respect which is due to the Queen. It is equally a great omission towards the King that his consort Queen should be obliged to submit to such great neglect, or rather arising from a perfect ignorance of the Archbishops of the real existence of the Queen Caroline of England.

The Queen is also very anxious that Lord Liverpool should communicate this letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Lord Liverpool will be not able to believe, I am sure of it, how much the Queen was surprised of this first act of cruel Tyranny towards her, as she had been informed through the newspapers of the 22d of February, that in the course of the Debate in the House of Commons on that evening, Lord Castlereagh, one of the best friends of Lord Liverpool, assured the Attorney-General to the Queen Caroline, Mr. Brougham, that the King's servants would not omit any attentions or use any harshness towards the Queen,

and after that speech of Lord Castlereagh to find her name left out of the Common Prayer-book, as if she was no longer for this world.

The Queen trusts that before she arrives in London to receive satisfactory answer from Lord Liverpool.

Caroline Queen.

By this time Brougham had come to adopt a much more moderate attitude with regard to Caroline than had been the case a few years earlier (though he was as ready to sell Caroline to the Cabinet as the Cabinet to Caroline), and with Liverpool's support and approval he crossed to the Continent in order to attempt to persuade her to accept some compromise, thus avoiding a visit by her to England. Unfortunately, as Canning so well put it, "faction had marked her for its own," and she had come under the influence of one Matthew Wood, M.P., whom Brougham described as "the ass and alderman." Wood seems to have been guided in his conduct primarily by an insatiable craving for notoriety, which he thought could be easily attained by inducing Caroline to come to England; he also hoped to turn her visit to pecuniary account by letting her a house on her arrival. As Wood was an ex-Lord Mayor of London, as well as one of the members for the City, he was able to pass for a man of some importance, particularly in the eyes of foreigners. Under his influence Caroline brushed aside every suggestion of a settlement, and continued her journey to England.

The man-in-the-street had no great respect for the Queen, but he had still less for her husband, so he gave her an uproarious welcome which she mistook for real sympathy and support for her cause. She received an ovation at Dover, and her journey to London was in the nature of a triumph. As the palace was denied to her, she took up her residence with Alderman Wood in South Audley Street. Nemesis, however, was not far behind, for on July 8th Liverpool introduced into the House of Lords a Bill of Pains and Penalties to deprive Caroline of her title, and to dissolve the marriage. The Queen's arrival in England had, in fact, left the Cabinet with no alternative between allowing her all the honours and privileges of her rank, and bringing definite accusations against her. The issue had to be fairly faced, although it is palpably clear that Liver-



pool would have preferred some middle course if such had been open to him.

What then ensued is without parallel in English history. Two years earlier a secret commission had gone out to Milan to investigate Caroline's conduct, and its report was the basis for the proceedings which were now taken against her. For weeks the discussion of the Bill of Pains and Penalties continued, while the Lords heard the evidence of the Milan commission, and the country was deluged with its sordid details. The crux of the question was whether the Queen had slept on the deck of a yacht with Bergami, but the witnesses on both sides seemed equally unsatisfactory. What was far more important than Caroline's morals was the effect of her trial upon the populace, and nothing could have been more alarming. Great impetus was given to the already prevalent unrest, and both the King and his ministers were publicly insulted on every possible occasion. Indeed, Louis XVIII, now firmly established on the throne, was beginning to wonder how soon he would be called upon to offer hospitality to the monarch whose guest he had himself been so lately.

On November 12th the third reading of the Bill was carried by a majority of no more than nine, and as there was in these circumstances little chance that it would pass the Commons, it was dropped. Liverpool's views are set out in a letter to Wilberforce.

*Private.*

File House,  
November 29th, 1820.

My dear Sir,

I send you in another cover a copy of my speech on the second reading of the Bill of Pains and Penalties.

You will observe that, in discussing the question, I have put out of consideration every fact that could be matter of doubt. I have rested my argument and opinion solely on the uncontradicted and uncontrovertible facts of the case. These are sufficient, I am satisfied, to furnish not only a moral conviction of guilt, but a judicial presumption of it according to the established principles of our courts, ecclesiastical as well as civil. In this opinion I know I am supported by all the first judicial authorities.

Having said thus much on this point, I have been desirous of writing to you for the purpose of explaining the view which I take of what ought to be the proceedings in Parliament when we meet at Christmas.

The bill in the House of Lords passed the second reading.<sup>1</sup> The preamble was agreed to, with some immaterial alterations, in the committee.

The bill then passed the third reading, but, in consequence of the smallness of the majority, the further consideration of it was put off for six months, with the intention certainly that a prorogation should put an end to the proceeding during that interval.

Every person who voted for the second reading of the bill must necessarily have done so because they thought the Queen guilty. Many voted against it on grounds of expediency. Some of them have recorded in protests their decided opinion of her guilt; others made a statement to the same effect on their legs in the House of Lords, and still more have recorded their opinion that innocence is not established.

It may be assumed that a great majority of the House of Lords have in one way or another affirmed the guilt of the Queen; but still there is no complete proceeding, either legislative or judicial, against her.

Under such circumstances she must continue to enjoy all the lawful rights of Queen. These cannot now be disputed.

With respect to provision, no separate provision is usually made for Queens Consort whilst they remain in that character. Any claim she can have to separate provision must be grounded upon her separation from the King, and even then it must be granted to her through him; and it will be for Parliament to determine under all the circumstances what the amount of that provision should be. It would be preposterous to say that her former conduct could be overlooked in such a consideration; but I am ready to admit that, as matters now stand, no condition of residence abroad nor any other stipulation can or ought to be annexed to the grant.

The grant should therefore be unconditional. The amount of it should, in my opinion, be the £50,000 a year to which she would have been entitled on the death of the Prince Regent. Upon this question of amount, however, I am not very solicitous.

The main consideration comes next. She is lawfully Queen, and no attempt should be made to divest her of any of her rights, *strictly legal*; but, on the other hand, I am most decidedly of opinion that nothing of any kind must be done which can have any way the effect of doing her honour, beyond her strict legal claims. She cannot on any principle be entitled to claim a residence in any of the ancient royal palaces; and, even if there were no reasons of convenience, or even of practicability against it, I should feel insurmountable difficulties in placing her in any one of them, surrounded, as she will probably be, by persons of the worst character, whether they be foreigners or natives, from whose society and connexion you have no means of estranging her.

But what is most material is the question of placing her name in the Liturgy.

I will not now enter upon the consideration of whether the omission was originally right. It was done upon grounds which were deemed sufficient

<sup>1</sup> By 123 to 95.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

at the time; but even were I to assume that it would have been better in the first instance to have inserted it as a matter of course, and as a mere ministerial act, it would be impossible now to insert it without, in my judgment, the most fatal consequences to the moral character of the nation both at home and abroad.

She would be considered as having carried all her points. She would be regarded in that case, and in that case only, as completely whitewashed, and, notwithstanding all the admitted facts of her conduct, and the declaration of her guilt by a large majority of the House of Lords, she would be regarded as a character cleared of all taint and reproach.

These considerations derive additional weight from the treasonable letter to the King,<sup>1</sup> and her treasonable and seditious answers to many of the addresses.

The conduct of Parliament in taking such step could be ascribed to nothing but fear, and such manifestation of fear would, as is usual, only add to all our national dangers.

I have no difficulty, therefore, in stating it distinctly, and in wishing it to be understood, that no consideration will induce me to be a party to any such measure. If Parliament should determine upon it, the country must dispense with my humble services. I would rather live in retirement the remainder of my life than give any sanction to a measure which will, I am satisfied, give a deadly blow to the moral character of the nation, and which will be felt after the present heats are over to the latest posterity as an eternal disgrace to all those who have participated in it.

You will ask me, what then is my own course of policy? I answer.

Some provision must be made for her Majesty. Grant that which is just and reasonable. Grant it without condition. Take no further step or proceeding whatever against her. But, above all, take no step nor proceeding in her favour which is not strictly necessary, but which might have the effect of setting her up and upholding her, after all that has passed, in the eyes of the country and of Europe.

I have thus fairly opened my mind to you on this subject. Let me beg of you to consider what I have said. You are at liberty to show this in confidence to any friend on whose discretion you can rely.

I am, etc.,

Liverpool.

The end of the drama was a great deal nearer than Liverpool can have anticipated or hoped. Caroline was by no means satisfied with her victory in the withdrawal of the Bill of Pains and Penalties, and she refused to abate any of her pretensions. She went to St. Paul's to return thanks, and London was illuminated for three nights in her honour. All the same, the

<sup>1</sup> An abusive and lengthy epistle written on August 7th.

public was becoming tired of her, and its attitude in the early months of 1821 was reflected in the lines:

Gracious Queen, we thee implore,  
Go away and sin no more;  
But if that effort be too great,  
Go away at any rate.

At the Derby she met with a cold reception, and the last act of her tragedy was played at the coronation, for she was determined to be crowned with the King. She wrote to him to ask what she should wear, and the wits suggested he should reply that a white sheet in the middle aisle would be most suitable. At five o'clock in the morning on the coronation day the Queen appeared at Westminster Abbey in a coach and six, and the Guards duly presented arms, while mingled groans and cheers came from the spectators. On reaching the door she was denied admission on the ground that she was without the necessary ticket, and after trying all the entrances in turn with the same result she drove away. Shortly afterwards, in the first week of August, she died, but even in death she was destined to be an embarrassment to Liverpool and his colleagues. She had latterly been living at Brandenburg House, Hammersmith, and by her will she ordered that her body should be buried in Brunswick with the inscription, "Here lies Caroline of Brunswick, the injured Queen of England," on the coffin. The authorities were determined to get the corpse to Harwich without taking it through the centre of London in order to avoid a riot, but the mob thought otherwise. Great crowds met it at St. Mary Abbot's Church in Kensington: the pavement was torn up, trees were thrown across the road, and the procession was forced into Hyde Park. At Cumberland Gate it attempted to make for Edgware Road, and a riot ensued during the course of which two people were killed. The funeral was then allowed to proceed along Edgware Road, Marylebone Road, and Euston Road as far as Tottenham Court Road; there the mob overcame all opposition, and forced it to pass through the City. Napoleon, too, died that summer, and it is said that when the King was informed that his greatest enemy was dead, he remarked, "Is she?"

The crisis provoked by the Queen's return to England cost

Liverpool the loss of one of the leading members of his government, namely Canning. Caroline was not only an old friend of Canning, but it had in no small degree been due to his representations in 1814 that she had been induced to take up her residence abroad. Such being the case, her return, in spite of his disapproval of it, placed him in an extremely difficult position; and when his colleagues in the Cabinet decided to introduce the Bill of Pains and Penalties he felt that the time had come when he could no longer remain silent. Accordingly, he placed his office at the King's disposal, but George refused to allow him to resign, and gave him full liberty of action: Canning availed himself of this by going abroad, without resigning the Presidency of the Board of Control, early in August before the proceedings against the Queen began. He returned in November, but realizing that the Queen's affairs were likely to be the leading topic of the day for some months to come, he finally resigned office.

Caroline's death in reality removed the only obstacle to Canning rejoining the ministry, and during the year 1821 no less than four series of negotiations took place between him and Liverpool with this end in view. The King, however, could be just as obstinate as his father, and he had taken offence at Canning's attitude in the Queen's case; in the face, therefore, of George's refusal to have him in the government, the negotiations all broke down.

After a successful visit to Ireland that summer the King decided to be crowned in Hanover, and on his way to the Continent he passed through the Cinque Ports, of which, it will be remembered, Liverpool was Lord Warden. On September 27th the Prime Minister wrote to Charles Arbuthnot from Walmer Castle.

The reception of the King at Ramsgate was very satisfactory, and his passage to Calais quite prosperous with the exception of a good knocking which he got on going ashore at Calais in consequence of the boat striking the ground. His manner to me was not over cordial, but not sufficiently otherwise to attract observation, and upon the whole I have no right to complain. I did all in my power to make his visit within the Cinque Ports popular, & gratifying to him. I am sure he saw that such was my intention. Sir Wm. Knighton was with him; he appear'd to be the man of business. To my surprise the Marqs. of Conyngham was with him likewise, and has

accompanied him to Hanover. This looks like preparing him for a household situation. If the King is *determined* to break with us it will not be upon this, I think it will be upon Canning.<sup>1</sup>

Liverpool was clearly not at the moment on the best of terms with his master, and this probably played its part in influencing George to refuse consent to the reappointment of Canning to office. The King wished for the nomination of Lord Conyngham as Lord Chamberlain, but as Conyngham's wife was not only George's mistress, but was also continually interfering in matters of ecclesiastical patronage, Liverpool was determined not to agree. Another, and more legitimate, cause of complaint was that the government had disregarded the King's orders to remove Caroline's body privately by water from Hammer-smith: the result had been the riot described above, so in this instance George had displayed more prescience than his official advisers.

Personal as well as public cares were Liverpool's lot at this time, for in the summer of 1821 he lost his wife, and in consequence played but a small part in the coronation festivities. Contemporaries have left little record of the first Lady Liverpool, who appears to have been excessively conventional and extremely dull. Like several other women, notably the wife of Hookham Frere, she disliked Canning, and was fearful of his influence over her husband. There were no children of the marriage. Liverpool may, indeed, be said to have had no private life at all, and in that age of diarists and letter-writers it is remarkable how few references, other than those of a purely political nature, there are to him in contemporary literature. He entertained to a moderate extent, but a visit to Coombe Wood or Walmer Castle seems to have been generally considered as boring in the extreme.

With the country having hardly regained its sanity after the disturbances occasioned by the Queen's return and death; with a ministry enfeebled by the resignation of its best debater; and with personal sorrow weighing him down, it was fortunate for Liverpool that the session of 1821 was not a difficult one, and that his administration was adequately supported in the division-lobbies of both Houses. Only one subject of real

<sup>1</sup> *The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot* (edited by A. Aspinall), p. 31.

interest arose, and that was the revival of the question of Parliamentary Reform in the matter of the disfranchisement of the Cornish borough of Grampound, which had long been notorious for corruption. The proposal was in the form of a Private Member's Bill, and was moved by Lord John Russell; the measure further transferred the two seats from Grampound to Leeds, which was at that time unrepresented. Liverpool's views are contained in a memorandum.

I assume what remains to be proved, that the borough of Grampound is so corrupt as to require to be disfranchised.

I assume likewise that, under the special circumstances of Cornwall, it is not advisable to throw the borough into the hundred, as has been done in all other cases, but that the right of election is to be transferred to some place or district.

I should then say that giving the right of election to the populous manufacturing towns was the worst remedy which could be applied.

In the first place, it would be the greatest evil conferred on those towns; it would subject the population to a perpetual factious canvass, which would divert, more or less, the people from their industrious habits, and keep alive a permanent spirit of turbulence and disaffection amongst them.

Against such a measure all the most respectable inhabitants of these towns would, I am convinced, protest.

If reference is made to the discussions on Parliamentary Reform at the time when Mr. Pitt brought forward his plan, it will be found that, with all the attempt that was made to obtain petitions from different parts of the country, the towns of Manchester and Birmingham could never be induced to petition for this advantage; and I have had, many years ago, conversations with the late Mr. Bolton and Mr. Garbett (the friend of the late Lord Lansdowne, and the most important person in Birmingham) on this matter, and though neither of them were adverse to Parliamentary Reform, they were decidedly adverse to Birmingham returning members to Parliament.

In the next place, I think the proposed transfer would be the most injurious to the Constitution that could be devised.

I do not wish to see more such boroughs as Westminster, Southwark, Nottingham etc. I believe them to be more corrupt than any other places when seriously contested; and I believe the description of persons which find their way into Parliament through these places are generally those who, from the peculiarity of their character or their station, are the least likely to be steadily attached to the good order of society.

I see all the difficulties of deviating from the old course of throwing the borough into the hundred. By this species of remedy we did not propose to reform Parliament, but to reform the particular borough. The moment we depart from it we launch into the sea of speculation. If I am driven, how-

ever, to the alternative, I should prefer transferring the member to the larger counties. County elections are the least corrupt of any in the kingdom.

The representatives of them, if not generally the ablest members in the House, are certainly those who have the greatest stake in the country, and may be trusted for the most part in periods of difficulty and danger.

If you destroy something corrupt, the natural course seems to be to substitute something sound and safe in the place of it, and not to prefer adding to the number of those which, taken in themselves, I must consider as the great evils of our present system; though I am aware that, in the limited extent in which they now exist, some advantages may be derived from them as part of a mixed and comprehensive representation. I do not see why the project of large towns limits itself more than that of large counties. The amount of population in the towns to which you would give representatives must be arbitrary. Why should you not therefore take either the population or extent of the counties?

If, for example, you were to take those counties which had more than 200,000 inhabitants, this would be as good a limitation as any you could apply respecting the great towns.

If, however, any project of borough reform could be devised, I should certainly prefer it to any addition to the county members. It would have many advantages, and this particular, that it would leave the frame and system of Parliament unaltered.

I should like, if it were possible, to make no alterations in the proportions of either county members, members for popular places, or members for boroughs, but to substitute, where abuse was proved, a pure and well-constituted borough for a corrupt one.

In accordance with these sentiments Liverpool, when Lord John Russell's Bill reached the Upper House, moved and carried the substitution of the county of Yorkshire for the borough of Leeds. "He proceeded," he said, "on no theoretical view. The true rule of conduct in questions of this kind was never to reform on speculation, but, when any part of the elective system was found corrupt, then to take means to correct it. When an evil was clearly proved to exist, nothing could be worse than to shut the door against a remedy. He supported the present Bill, not because he was a Parliamentary Reformer, but because he was an enemy to all plans of general reform."

Domestic affairs, however, were not by any means Liverpool's only concern, for if the revolutionary storm was beginning to abate somewhat at home, there were distinct signs that the spirit of unrest was by no means extinguished on the mainland of Europe. Just before the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle



there had been a meeting of students at the Wartburg to celebrate the third centenary of the Reformation and the fourth anniversary of the battle of Leipsic. This assembly proved somewhat disorderly, and ended with a bonfire of books favourable to the *ancien régime*. In March 1819 occurred the murder of Kotzebue, who was the friend of Alexander. These events alarmed the Powers of the Holy Alliance, and in August of the same year Metternich convoked a conference of all the German states at Carlsbad, when the most drastic measures were adopted. Every university was to have a curator, whose task it was to supervise the political significance of the teaching given, and who was to be appointed by the sovereign in whose dominions the university was situated. All unauthorized student societies were to be dissolved, and a censorship of the Press was to be instituted. Finally, a commission was to be set up at Mayence to enquire into the origin of revolutionary movements; its labours were to be retrospective; and the different states were to arrest, even on mere suspicion, all individuals designated by the commission. Such were the Carlsbad Decrees, and they were duly converted into Federal laws by the Diet.

It proved, as usual, by no means difficult to force Germany into docility, but in 1820 revolution broke out in Spain, and it was not long in spreading to Italy. One of the periodic congresses<sup>1</sup> was about to take place, this time at Troppau, and the Powers of the Holy Alliance determined to utilize it for the suppression of the movements which they regarded with such suspicion. Castlereagh divined their purpose, and although the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian monarchs appeared at Troppau in person, Great Britain was represented only by the ambassador in Vienna, who happened to be the brother of the Foreign Secretary. This conference proved to be the parting of the ways so far as Great Britain and her old associates of the Quadruple Alliance were concerned, for the Powers of the Holy Alliance passed a vote in favour of Austrian intervention in Naples, where King Ferdinand I had been forced by his subjects to grant a constitution. The British representative

<sup>1</sup> It had been decided at Aix-la-Chapelle to hold another congress for a consideration of the affairs of Europe.

refused to vote regarding the fate of an independent state, and he wrote to his brother, "The first acts of Troppau framed an alliance between the Three Courts which placed them entirely in a new attitude from us, and they have now, I consider, hermetically sealed their treaty before Europe." Another congress, at Laibach in 1821, was held to consider the matter, and before it concluded its labours the insurrections in the various Italian states had been stamped out by the Austrian armies. In future any changes in their legislation and administration were, according to the dictates of the Holy Alliance, only to proceed "from the free will, and reflective and enlightened impulsion, of those whom God has rendered responsible for the power."

Castlereagh, with whom Liverpool was in full agreement, was far from approving of the policy embodied in the Carlsbad Decrees and elaborated at Troppau, but it was not to the interest of Great Britain, as it was certainly beyond her power, to interfere. It was not her business to express approval or disapproval of events which she could not influence, and the then Foreign Secretary firmly adhered to the maxim which was defined by one of his successors in the words "the arm of this country should never be put further forward than it could be maintained." Nor did he wish to imperil the European equilibrium, so painfully re-established only a few years before, by encouraging movements which he knew to be doomed to failure. Furthermore, he did not permit any open breach between himself and Metternich over Austrian intervention in Italy, for he realized that Vienna had special interests there: at the same time he was quite firmly resolved that he would not give even a tacit consent to the employment of the same methods in respect of the Spanish revolt. He believed in the congress system, since it provided an opportunity for the statesmen of Europe to come into personal contact, and he was reluctant to take any step which might accelerate the end of that system.

There was, however, soon to be a change at the Foreign Office. Castlereagh had been continuously in office since 1812; he had worked for twelve to fourteen hours a day; and his official correspondence filled seventy volumes. Yet he was

easily the best-hated member of the government, and slowly but surely the iron entered into his soul. Nevertheless, as late as 1821 contemporaries noticed no change, and Croker was writing, "Londonderry<sup>1</sup> goes on as usual, and . . . like Mont Blanc, continues to gather all the sunshine upon his icy head. He is better than ever; that is colder, steadier, more *pocourante*, and withal more amiable and respected. It is a splendid summit of bright and polished frost which, like the travellers in Switzerland, we all admire, but no one can hope, and few would wish, to reach." In the following year signs became visible that Castlereagh was no longer his former self, although he was only fifty-two. First of all he was a prey to profound melancholy, and he expressed doubts whether he would be able to attend a forthcoming congress at Verona. Then he developed persecution mania, and imagined plots against his life. The doctor was called in, and matters were made worse by the usual bleeding and lowering drugs. The sick man, still believing in the plots against him, asked for, but was refused, his pistols, and his razors were taken from the room. On the morning of August 12th, 1822, he was heard to moan, "My mind, mind is, as it were gone," and on being left alone for a few minutes he cut his throat with a small knife which he had managed to secrete in a drawer. Popular hate pursued him to his grave in Westminster Abbey. The funeral procession, reported *The Times*, "reached the great western door of the Abbey exactly at a quarter after nine o'clock. The assemblage of persons in that vicinity was so dense that the space unoccupied was merely sufficient to allow the procession to pass along it. On the arrival of the hearse among them, a most discordant yell displayed the animosity which they felt for the deceased nobleman."

It was against this background of disorder that Liverpool had to govern the country.

<sup>1</sup> He succeeded to the peerage in 1821.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LAST YEARS

1822-1828

FROM the moment that the news of Castlereagh's death reached him, Liverpool made up his mind that Canning should be the next Foreign Secretary and leader of the House of Commons, cost what this might in the shape of a clash with the King. At the particular moment when the Foreign Office became vacant Canning was about to leave for India to take up the appointment of Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal, and George IV was on a visit to Scotland, accompanied by Peel, who had recently succeeded Sidmouth as Home Secretary, in the capacity of minister in attendance. It soon became clear that the King was not going to give way without a struggle, for in reply to a letter from Liverpool suggesting postponement of any discussion concerning a successor to Castlereagh until his return, he wrote:

*Private.*

Royal George Yacht, Leith Roads,  
*August 15th, 1822.*

Dear Lord Liverpool,

I cannot express the painful grief which I feel at your melancholy communication; melancholy indeed, both for myself and others who knew the inestimable value of this superior and excellent person.

The ways of Providence are so inscrutable to us poor blind creatures that, on occasions of this description, the agony of one's mind is lost in amazement. You, my Lord, will not be surprised that I should feel this. I think you have judged rightly in not coming, and I quite approve that no arrangements should be thought of till my return to town.

Your sincere friend,

George R.

*PS.* I write one word more, to desire that you will favour no intentions respecting the blue ribbon.

LORD LIVERPOOL

Royal second thoughts came quickly:

*Most Private.*

Dalkeith Palace,

*August 17th, 1822.*

Dear Lord Liverpool,

Notwithstanding the hurry and agitated confusion in which I am necessarily kept, yet, as you may suppose, I cannot help considering very deeply the distress and embarrassment in which my Government must be placed by the death of my esteemed and valued friend Lord Londonderry.

The immediate object of my writing to you this letter is not to make any proposal at present with a view of supplying the lamentable void produced by the untimely death of this excellent statesman, but to desire that you will not interrupt, and on no account impede the arrangements which are already settled respecting India, as it is my decision that they should remain final and unalterable.

I am induced to say thus much to you for the purpose of guarding you against any new negotiation with the individual in question.

Believe me, your sincere friend always,

G. R.

Nor was this all, for the King tried to win Peel to his side:

*Most Private.*

Edinburgh,

*August 20th, 1822.*

Dear Lord Liverpool,

I think it right, at least it will be a satisfaction to my mind, to mention to you something which passed with the King yesterday.

On going into the closet to him before the addresses were presented, he said to me, "I will now tell you what I purposely postponed telling you until forty-eight hours after I had done it, that I have written to Lord Liverpool informing him that it is my decided intention that all the arrangements with respect to India should remain as they were settled before Lord Londonderry's death, and that there should be no delay in completing them." The King added, "I hope you think I have done right." I replied that I was sensible of his kindness in not having previously mentioned his intention to write to you, and that I hoped he would excuse me if I declined giving any opinion upon the subject of his letter to you, or saying a word upon any point connected with it.

Believe me, dear Lord Liverpool,

Yours most truly,

Robert Peel.

Liverpool was, however, determined to have his way, and he was encouraged to believe that the King would yield without

too much trouble by a message from Lady Conyngham to the effect that the royal objections to Canning would probably not be found insuperable. One or two of the Prime Minister's colleagues, notably Eldon and Melville, also, were far from enthusiastic about the proposed appointment, but soon after the King returned to London on September 1st a meeting of the Cabinet was called, and Liverpool persuaded the dissentients to agree; he was thus able to assure the Sovereign that their unanimous verdict was in favour of Canning. In these circumstances the King gave way.

*Private.*

Carlton House,  
*September 8th, 1822.*

Dear Lord Liverpool,

I send you the enclosed note; by this you will see that I have sacrificed my private feelings, as you and other members of the Cabinet have represented to me that it is what you consider to be for the good of the public service. I have on every occasion, as in this instance, shown my regard and sincerity towards my Government, and I therefore look with confidence to a similar return. This is the greatest sacrifice of my opinions and feelings I have ever made in my life.<sup>1</sup>

Believe me, your sincere friend,

G. R.

The enclosure was as follows:

Carlton House,  
*September 8th, 1822.*

The King has given the fullest consideration to the proposition submitted by Lord Liverpool relative to the admission of Mr. Canning into the King's Government.

The King has always been justly impressed with the value of Mr. Canning's talents, and the King had taught himself to believe that such talents might, and ought to have been exercised for the benefit of his sovereign and his country.

When Mr. Canning thought proper to tender his resignation to the King, and to retire from the King's councils, the King expressed to Mr. Canning his regret that the country was to be deprived of his services.

It was at this period of time that the King had reason to view with surprise the line of conduct which Mr. Canning then, and afterwards, thought proper to adopt.

<sup>1</sup> It subsequently transpired that at this date the King believed Canning to have committed adultery with the Queen.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

The King forbears to enter into details; the King is aware that the brightest ornament of his crown is the power of extending grace and favour to a subject who may have incurred his displeasure.

The King therefore permits Lord Liverpool to propose Mr. Canning's admission into the Government, and the King desires that the communication may be made to Mr. Canning by the transmission of this note.

G. R.

Liverpool replied at once:

*Private.*

Coombe Wood,  
September 8th, 1822.

Lord Liverpool has this moment had the honour of receiving your Majesty's letter, and he feels himself quite overcome with the generosity and goodness manifested by your Majesty, in the sacrifice which your Majesty has condescended to make of your personal feelings, to the consideration of what has been humbly represented to your Majesty by so many of your confidential servants, as the advantage of the public service.

Your Majesty may most fully rely upon the deep impression which this act of confidence and kindness of your Majesty cannot fail to make upon the mind of Lord Liverpool, and of all those with whom your Majesty has been graciously pleased to communicate upon this most trying occasion.

Lord Liverpool will, in obedience to your Majesty's commands, communicate to Mr. Canning your Majesty's letter, by which your Majesty has been graciously pleased to consent to his admission into your Majesty's service.

Canning thereupon wrote an appropriate letter to the King in which he said that in the transactions of the period in question "he had not the remotest intention of giving any offence to his Majesty," and by the middle of September he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and leader of the House of Commons.

At the same time there are reasons to suppose that the King never really conquered his dislike of Canning, whatever may have been the appearances to the contrary, and an extract from a letter from Arbuthnot to Liverpool in October of the following year throws a curious light on George's relations with his two leading ministers:

Whether it was known to yourself or not I cannot at present recollect; but I remember well that, putting aside, more perhaps than you were aware of, his own personal objections against Canning, the King dreaded his admission into the Cabinet from the fear he had lest his influence should

be great with you. The King now thinks that those fears have been realised. This he not only thinks, but it would not be in the power of words to eradicate the notion from his mind. He never did like Canning, & my belief is that he never will like him; but I am sure I am not going too far in saying that he wd. rather make Canning his Prime Minister rather than continue to have the conviction that the real power is already vested in him, while the name alone remains with you.

You may be able to tell better than I can what it is that has impressed this feeling upon the King; but I am sure, from the way in which he spoke of it to me that for a long time he has been thinking of nothing else; & that to put an end to what he is so convinced exists, he wd. most readily risk the very existence of the Government. Do not, however, imagine that he wants to get rid of you. He wants, on the contrary, to have you his Minister, as Mr. Pitt was at one time the Minister of his father; but if he cannot effect this, & if circumstances should still rivet him in the belief that from you he is always hearing Canning's sentiments, & not your own, he would *faute de mieux* rather go to Canning & put himself entirely in his hands, than allow him, as I said before, to have the reality of the power, tho' not the name of it. Could you have overheard all that he said to me of Canning, you wd. not suppose that he had formed a more favourable opinion of him; but he worked himself up to say to me that Canning, with all his faults, had at least the merit of having unbounded attachment to his friends, & that, should he ever be driven to have recourse to him, every species of personal attention wd. be received from him.<sup>1</sup>

Liverpool commented on these statements in his reply.

You say the K. conceives Canning to have an unbounded influence over my mind and opinions. I know not on what he grounds this. As long as the Govt. is to be conducted on the system of the last twelve years, it cannot be conducted without a thorough good understanding and confidence between the First Minister and the Minister of the House of Commons. When the situations were reversed, Perceval felt this as to me; Londonderry and I always felt it, and I am quite sure the Govt. could not stand many months if the persons in my situation & Canning's were to look at each other with jealousy and suspicion, but I am not aware of Canning having assumed in a single instance authority or influence in matters which do not belong to him, and the whole (if it has any foundation) must be grounded upon the notion that Canning & I happen to have agreed more nearly than some of our other colleagues, not upon what was to be *done*, but upon our views of the possible result of the successful French invasion of Spain.

How can the K., however, think he can accomplish his object, if I was to resign, or if if [*sic*] I was to put myself decidedly in the wrong in any difference with the King? There is no reason why any of my colleagues should follow me, but I think the K. will find himself very much mistaken

<sup>1</sup> *The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot* (edited by A. Aspinall), pp. 48-9.



## LORD LIVERPOOL

if he supposes that if he dismissed me because it was his *royal will & pleasure*, or if he created an obvious pretence for this purpose, that Canning, Peel, or anyone of my colleagues would remain behind.

. . . . I am arrived at a period of life when it may not unnaturally be my wish to be relieved from all public cares. What I have seen of others in similar, or nearly similar situations, confirms my impressions in this respect. The K. is mistaken if he supposes that I have any anxious desire to remain in his service. He cannot be too strongly apprized of this truth. If I see I cannot go on with honour & with credit, it will be for me to consider *when* I can most easily retire, but let the K. take care that he does not make the close of a reign which has been hitherto most glorious, & upon the whole most prosperous, stormy and miserable.<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy for a later generation to understand the constitutional, or for that matter the personal, relations between George IV and his ministers. The last hundred years have not only witnessed a transvaluation of political values, but an entirely new interpretation has been put upon a number of words and phrases; so that the path of the seeker after truth is beset with many difficulties. When his personal character is taken into account it is not easy to resist the conclusion that the ministers who treated him with such outward respect must have done so with their tongues in their cheeks; yet such was by no means the case. Liverpool, for example, had the highest opinion of the King's brain, and on very many occasions asked George's advice, not as part of any constitutional routine, but because he valued it. Furthermore, to contemporary statesmen, the office of King was a matter of the very first importance. Time and time again throughout the eighteenth, and early nineteenth, century the occupant of the throne took a different line from his ministers, and even encouraged opposition to their policy, but they made no serious objection. It is true that for many years it was for the King and his advisers a case of hanging together or hanging separately, for any serious disagreement would have meant the return of the Stuarts; but even when this danger no longer existed, as in the reign of George IV, the statesmen, on the Tory side at any rate—and the Whigs were almost continuously out of office from 1783 to 1830—behaved correctly towards the Crown. Men like Liverpool believed so implicitly in the monarchy as an effective

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

piece of the machinery of the constitution that they would do nothing to lower its prestige even when the monarch himself was in the wrong and they were the victims.

There was never any suggestion that George IV should not interfere in politics; all that his ministers demanded was that such interference should be within the limits of the Revolution settlement, and that he should not seem to utilize his position as King of Hanover to oppose the official policy of his British advisers. Actually, he exercised more direct influence upon the progress of events than the first two monarchs of his dynasty had done, or than any subsequent occupant of his throne was to do. Furthermore, he kept the prerogatives of the Crown intact, namely those of mercy, the dissolution and convocation of Parliament, the dismissal and selection of ministers, the cession of territory, the creation of peers, and the nomination to official appointments. All these prerogatives George IV left as he found them.

Few events were for so long the subject of so much misconception as the succession of Canning to Castlereagh at the Foreign Office, and it was widely maintained that from this event could be dated a complete change in British foreign policy. Nothing could in reality be further from the truth. It is true that Canning was by nature more downright than his predecessor, and he had not long been in office when he wrote to Bagot, "You know my politics well enough to know what I mean—when I say that for 'Europe' I shall be desirous now and then to read 'England' "<sup>1</sup>; but the difference was in pace rather than in direction. In any event it is always easier for a new minister than for an old one to lead his country along a fresh path in international affairs. Old friends and associates among the representatives of foreign Powers inevitably exercise a restraining influence, and even the most determined of men finds it difficult to turn his back upon those with whom he has been associated in good fortune and ill for a number of years. So it was with Castlereagh. He might entertain few illusions concerning the policy of Alexander or of Metternich, but he had worked with them, first of all to defeat Napoleon, and then to recast the map of Europe at Vienna. However much he

<sup>1</sup> Bagot, J., *George Canning and His Friends*, vol. II, p. 138.

might disapprove of their later conduct, it was in these circumstances but natural that he should tarry for a space at the parting of the ways, even if he had no doubt in his own mind that further co-operation was neither possible nor desirable.

For Canning the situation was very different. He saw in Alexander merely Napoleon's accomplice at Tilsit, and there was little in the memory of his former tenure of the Foreign Office to recommend the Tsar in his eyes. With Metternich he had not had any earlier relations, so he was under no special obligation to consider the Austrian Chancellor's feelings. In effect, all Canning did during the first months of his second period at the Foreign Office was to pursue rather more vigorously the policy of detachment from the Holy Alliance which had been initiated by Castlereagh. To speak of any violent breach, as used to be the fashion with an earlier generation of historians, is to ignore the fact that Canning was not a dictator, but a minister in Liverpool's administration. "Our business is to preserve," he said, "so far as may be, the peace of the world, and therewith the independence of the several nations which compose it." This is not a definition of policy to which Castlereagh would have taken exception, and Sir Charles Webster and the late Professor Temperley have rightly shown that the difference between the two men in their conduct of affairs was dictated by changing circumstances rather than by any fundamental conflict of principle.

The appointment of Canning to the Foreign Office was not the only change in the Cabinet at this time, for hardly less important had been, in the previous January, the substitution of Peel for Sidmouth as Home Secretary. Then, at the beginning of the following year, Liverpool replaced Vansittart at the Exchequer by "Prosperity" Robinson, while Huskisson went to the Board of Trade. These changes, coming within so short a time of one another, have on occasion induced historians to take the view that the story of Liverpool's post-war administration falls into two sharply contrasted periods. The first, they maintain, was one of repression and reaction, and the second, after the arrival of Canning, Peel, and Huskisson to high office, was one of progress and enlightenment, pointing the way to the reforms of the following years of the nineteenth century. There

is possibly something in this argument, but it can be pushed too far. First of all, as Mr. Brock has pointed out in his *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism, 1820-1827*, the Prime Minister was never the blind reactionary of Disraelian tradition, and in the second place the circumstances of the time have to be taken into account.

As we have seen, the years which immediately followed the conclusion of the war with France were marked by revolutionary agitation of the most violent type; there was no adequate police force, the army had been drastically reduced after the peace, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that law and order were finally made to triumph. It cannot be stated too often that Liverpool's experiences in Paris in the days of his youth had made the most profound impression upon him, and during this period his efforts were concentrated upon adopting such measures as would ensure that England did not go the way of France. It was no time for reforms, which could wait until the country was more settled. Liverpool was not the man to shape his policy under pressure from the mob; he had seen too much of the consequences of this procedure. When conditions improved, reforms could be put in hand, and this was what happened.

Nothing in his later years became Liverpool so well as his handling of the great financial crisis of 1825 when he "proved himself a worthy successor of Sir Robert Walpole."<sup>1</sup> The speculative frenzy of that year was due to a number of causes, but it differed from the railway mania of the succeeding generation in that it had no solid basis of remunerative investment. The weakening of the hold of Spain on the Americas left her colonies open to foreign trade and investment, and the most extravagant hopes of fortunes to be made almost overnight came to be entertained by large sections of the British public, with the result that there was a wave of speculation such as had not been seen since the days of the South Sea Bubble. Whether or not warming-pans and skates were actually exported to the tropics, it is certain that Scottish dairy-women emigrated to Buenos Aires for the purpose of milking wild cows and churning butter for a population which greatly preferred oil. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Political History of England*, vol. XI, p. 205.

incredible multiplication of bubble-companies was facilitated by the remarkable cheapness of money, largely due to an excessive issue of notes by country bankers, and even by the Bank of England itself.

The inevitable reaction came when the Bank contracted its issue of notes in order to arrest the drain of gold, whereupon goods recklessly bought up had to be sold at considerable loss, and bills upon which advances had been made proved to be of no value. A run on the banks then ensued, and the first of them to close its doors did so on December 5th. By the end of the year no less than seventy-three of them had stopped payment, and although some of them subsequently regained their solvency, the temporary stoppage caused widespread unemployment and distress.

Parliament was in recess, and Liverpool was in the country, when the crisis broke, but the Cabinet was at once summoned, and it showed no want of firmness or resource. Ministers could not, it is true, repair the consequences of the national folly, but they proceeded to devote themselves with intelligence to a restoration of credit. Liverpool had long been critical of the banking system as then operated, and he declared in a public speech that "the system of law as to banks is one of the most absurd which has ever been invented. It is in the teeth of all sound policy and commonsense." In his view the main cause of the trouble lay in the existing state of the law which provided that no banking company should consist of more than six partners, but placed no restriction whatever upon the establishment of a bank by a single individual: nor was there any precaution to ensure that it was established by people with sufficient capital, and not by those whose main object was fraud. Liverpool was also of the opinion that a further weakness lay in the readiness of the country banks to grant facilities to speculators in order to obtain clients.

Somewhat against the will of a few of them, Liverpool persuaded his colleagues to suppress at once the further issue of small notes by the country banks, though he admitted that for this rather high-handed measure an act of indemnity might subsequently be needed. At the same time the supply of small notes from the Bank of England, and of coin from the Mint,

was rapidly increased. The Bank was also induced to establish branches in a few provincial towns, and to make advances upon merchants' goods to the amount of three millions. It was, further, decided to introduce legislation to institute joint-stock banks in the provinces, though not within a distance of sixty-five miles from London. This display of firmness on the part of the government soon had the effect of restoring confidence, and Liverpool was able to write to the King that, "though the state of affairs and of the City continues highly critical, there exists the best spirit among the most respectable merchants and bankers."

Liverpool was now presiding over the most brilliant Cabinet which Britain was to know until that of Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith in the early years of the following century, and it might consequently have been supposed that he would have relaxed somewhat that close supervision which he had always exercised over his ministers and their departments, but such was not the case. Although he was by now in his fifties, there was no slackening of attention to duty on his part. Whether he was at Fife House, Coombe Wood, or Walmer Castle, his private life and his public were indistinguishable. "He had no habits," the Duke of Buckingham wrote, "of any but official employment." In the autumn of 1822 he had married again, at Hampton Court Palace, this time to a Miss Chester, niece of the first Lord Bagot, and occasionally we read of a brief holiday. As, for instance, on September 9th, 1825, he wrote from Walmer Castle to Arbuthnot, "We had a most agreeable tour, which we extended to The Hague & Amsterdam. Lady Liverpool was much pleased with an opportunity of seeing Holland, & it answer'd thoroughly to me, who had been in that country before, though at a distance of thirty-five years. I never saw any country in a more improving & flourishing condition than the *whole* of the kingdom of the Netherlands. The difference in going from or returning to France is very striking, though France is certainly improving."<sup>1</sup> Yet, even if the political waters in which he was sailing were for the moment a little more tranquil, Liverpool never for a moment relaxed his control of the helm.

One first-class political crisis there was during these years,

<sup>1</sup> *The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot* (edited by A. Aspinall), p. 78.

and in it Liverpool played the decisive part. It was over the recognition of the former Spanish colonies as independent states. The result of the revolution in Spain itself in 1820, to which reference has already been made, was to make Ferdinand VII a prisoner in the hands of the revolutionaries, and he was only delivered by a French army under the Duc d'Angoulême which invaded the Peninsula with the blessing of the Holy Alliance. The British government had not the means with which to prevent the French invasion of Spain, and Liverpool and Canning were never men to threaten where they could not perform, but it was determined that the Spanish colonies should not share the fate of their mother country and pass under the control of Paris. Therefore, two very important steps were taken: the first was that consuls were accredited to the chief towns in Latin America, and a commission was sent to Mexico and Colombia to report on the question of their formal recognition. In the meantime, Canning obtained from the French ambassador an avowal that his government considered the recovery by Spain of her colonies to be out of the question, while he disclaimed any intention on the part of Louis XVIII to undertake armed intervention in the Americas or to annex any territory there.

The Cabinet was divided on the subject of recognition, and Wellington declared, "We pass in Europe for a Jacobin Club." The King gave his full support to the dissentients, and all his old dislike of the Foreign Secretary revived. On the other hand Canning possessed one great advantage, in that it was not possible for his domestic opponents to rely upon the arguments which were influencing the conduct of the Holy Alliance. Alexander and Metternich based their refusal to recognize the independence of the Spanish colonies on the ground that the origin of the new states was revolutionary; though in actual fact the Austrian Chancellor did not believe in legitimism, while the Tsar had ascended the throne over the body of his murdered father. Such an excuse could hardly be put forward by the man who owed his crown to the Revolution of 1688, so George IV, and those who thought with him, were forced back upon the argument of expediency, and in that connection events were decidedly favouring the Foreign Secretary.

## LAST YEARS

Liverpool fully supported Canning on this issue.

*Private.*

Walmer Castle,  
October 24th, 1824.

My dear Canning,

I do not see how we can take any decisive step as to Mexico till after our meeting in the beginning of December. You might say as much to Michelana, and as a further reason add that we are waiting for reports from Morier. It is impossible to say what will be the state of our information at that time. As at present informed, I should be for making the proposition to Spain,<sup>1</sup> and if (as there can be no doubt) Spain declined it, then to conclude a commercial treaty with Mexico, which would be the *first step of recognition*, and completely conformable to the line we have already taken with Buenos Ayres.

I wish we could hear from Peru. My fears are that Bolivar has failed, and that the Royalists are in considerable force in those provinces. This throws us back, not merely as to Peru, but as to the whole question.

If the Columbians had left the Peruvians to themselves the question would not have been so difficult; but, by engaging in the contest in Peru, the Columbians admit that their success in that quarter is necessary, in a great degree, to the security of their own independence. It is useless, however to speculate on these matters without more information than we now possess.

Ever truly yours,

Liverpool.

Shortly after this letter was written reports arrived from the British representatives in Colombia and Mexico favourable to the recognition of the independence of those two countries, while in Buenos Aires the rule of Spain had not been effective for above a decade. In these circumstances Liverpool decided that the time had come to bring matters to a head, and he therefore called a meeting of the Cabinet for the express purpose of deciding whether in the attitude to be adopted towards the former Spanish colonies the government was bound to consider "the wishes and opinions of Spain," or anything but "the existing situation of the colonies themselves, external and internal, and our own interests," and whether it was necessary to shape our conduct by "a reference to the feelings of the Continental allied Powers." Before this meeting took place

<sup>1</sup> A guarantee of Cuba if the Spanish government would agree to a peaceful separation from the colonies on the mainland.



Liverpool drew up, and circulated to the members of the Cabinet, a long memorandum<sup>1</sup> in favour of recognition: it concluded with the words, "Let us not, then, throw the present golden opportunity away, which, once lost, may never be recovered." To strengthen his case, he and Canning both announced their intention of resigning if the proposal was not adopted.

In the face of this threat their opponents in the ministry gave way,<sup>2</sup> but the King was far from mollified, and in a communication to the Cabinet he gave it as his opinion that "the whole proceedings relative to this question are premature"; nevertheless he did not oppose his ministers' decision, and in the King's Speech at the opening of Parliament in February 1825 there occurred the passage, "In conformity with the declarations which have been repeatedly made by His Majesty, His Majesty has taken measures for confirming by treaties the commercial relations already subsisting between this kingdom and those countries of America which appear to have established their separation from Spain."<sup>3</sup> Owing to the fact that he had misplaced his false teeth, and had no other set, the King was unable to open Parliament in person, so by the irony of fate the Royal Speech was read by Eldon, one of the bitterest opponents of the policy it enunciated.

The competence of Liverpool as Prime Minister is attested not only by his handling of a crisis but also by the constant supervision which he exercised over every branch of the administration, and by the evident dependence of his colleagues upon his judgment, as one or two examples will serve to prove.

<sup>1</sup> It can be found in *extenso* in Yonge, C. D., *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool, K.G.*, vol. III, pp. 297-304.

<sup>2</sup> "Liverpool was always with Canning, and the authority of Prime Minister, coupled with the impossibility of replacing him, provided the essential strategic point, a point which produced a united Cabinet in place of a deadlock." Brock, W. R., *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism, 1820-1827*, p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> Aspinall, A., *The Letters of King George IV*, vol. III, pp. 97-100. Before the end of the year there was a reconciliation between the King and Canning. Later still, when Prime Minister, Canning was to write with his "affectionate" duty to his Sovereign, and after his death George IV wrote, "Mr. Canning never kept anything back from the King." (*The Letters of King George IV*, vol. III, p. 291.)

LAST YEARS

F.O.,

*February 21st, 1824.*

My dear Liverpool,

Here is a question of Court etiquette which I know not how to solve.

The ex-King of Sardinia is dead—the abdicated King.<sup>1</sup> Ought the Court to go into mourning for him?

In ordinary cases the Lord Chamberlain gives the orders for mourning as a matter of course upon receiving the notification of death.

In this case the Duke of Montrose declines doing so without special instructions, though giving it as his opinion that the Court ought to mourn. What think you?

Ever yours,

G. C.

My dear Canning,

As to the abstract title of King, I could not answer; but the Sardinians are all relatives, and there are those who think that the ex-King was the lawful King of Great Britain to the day of his death. We must, I think, therefore mourn for him.

Ever yours,

L.

In the following September a much more important monarch died, namely Louis XVIII, and a situation arose which called for the exercise of all Liverpool's skill and tact. There was first of all the possibility that the King would take some sudden step which might prove embarrassing to his ministers, and then there was the desire of Canning to pay an immediate visit to Paris in order to sound the views of the new King of France, Charles X. The Foreign Secretary was at the moment in the country, and Liverpool's letter to him was in the circumstances little short of a masterpiece.

Fife House,

*September 21st, 1824.*

My dear Canning,

I received this morning your letter of the 18th.

I thought it right to come up to town, as I did not know what had passed between his Majesty and you with respect to what it would be necessary should be done upon the death of the King of France; and I was anxious that he should not make any false impressions, and above all that he should not commit himself before he had seen you or me.

I am happy to say that all is just as it should be. What appears to be immediately necessary will be done to-night, and the rest may stand over till your return on Sunday or Monday next.

<sup>1</sup> Victor Emmanuel I, the senior descendant of Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, daughter of Charles I.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

Upon the death of George III all the great Powers sent special missions of condolence to our King. This is of course the precedent which we ought to follow, more particularly in the present instance; for it is scarcely necessary to say that on the occasion of the first accession to the throne of France since the restoration it would be desirable to do *rather* too much than too little.

It appeared to me besides highly expedient, that, considering the former personal connection of Charles X with this country, our King should confer upon him the Order of the Garter; and if this is to be done (in which the King most entirely concurs) it is very desirable that it should be done, or at least be announced as to be done, before any of the other great Powers have taken measures of the same nature.

I have settled with the King that Planta shall write a private letter to Sir Charles Stuart to-night, to say that a special mission will be sent, that he might communicate this to Monsicur de Villèle,<sup>1</sup> but that all details must be deferred till your return to town, which was expected in a few days.

I did not say a single word to the King as to the nature and extent of the special mission, nor as to the person to be employed upon it; nor did he say anything himself upon either of these heads. He quite concurred in the propriety of reserving these points till you come back.

I will now state to you what has occurred to me upon this part of the subject.

If the mission is to be in any degree political, I think it would be better that you should go than any other minister, but I doubt the policy of giving it this character.

Diverging as our policy does on so many points, but more especially respecting South America, from that of the other Great Powers, the arrival at Paris of any minister of ours, but particularly of a Secretary of State on such an occasion, would create alarm amongst all the other missions and their respective Governments. And the very circumstances of the alarm might embarrass the French Government, and render them less disposed to be open and explicit with us than they might be through Granville, or through any other ambassador in whom they knew you and the Government had implicit confidence.

Independently, however, of this consideration, I do not think any good likely to result from such a communication which would compensate the objection to it, state that objection as low as you please.

The main question for France to consider in her foreign policy at this moment, is, whether she shall incline to Russia or to this country.

I believe her interest to be to incline to this country, and I believe further this to be Villèle's opinion, but he dare not act upon it. He is afraid of the Allies. He is afraid of the ultra-Royalists, who revolt at our limitations to the principle of legitimacy, and he is afraid perhaps still more of the public opinion in France, which at all times, but more especially since 1815, is hostile to England.

<sup>1</sup> The French Prime Minister.

## LAST YEARS

I have no expectation, therefore, that France will play any game which is not shuffling and ambiguous, and I think she may be led more into our views of policy by caution on our part, and by our *not appearing to court* her too much, than by any step which would peculiarly excite attention, and create jealousy either at home or abroad.

If you should determine upon not going, no one could be more proper than Granville,<sup>1</sup> but then he would not go from *hence*. The most natural person would be the Duke of Montrose, as the King's Lord Chamberlain, but he is now in Scotland, and the passage from Dover to Calais might give him a severe fit of the gout.

Planta will tell you the other names which have occurred to me. I should prefer Lord Pembroke; he would be highly acceptable to the King of France, and would, I think, be flattered by the offer.

As I have done all my business, and am anxious to get back to Walmer, I shall leave London to-morrow evening.

Believe me, etc.,

Liverpool.

In face of this letter Canning abandoned his proposed visit to Paris, but not before it had led to a disagreement with Wellington, who had written to him that it would result in "inconvenience to the public and annoyance to yourself."<sup>2</sup> The truth was that Canning and Wellington were very uneasy colleagues; one of the main reasons for this was the marked contrast in their characters, for Canning, with all his faults, was the most forgiving of men once the occasion of a dispute had passed, while Wellington, with all his virtues, could neither forgive nor forget. It required all the Prime Minister's patience and tact to make the two men work together.

In spite of the many claims upon him during these last years of his Premiership, Liverpool found time to deal with a number of minor matters which he felt required attention, and allusion may, perhaps, be made to one of them as evidence of his natural kindly feelings.

Fife House,

June 30th, 1823.

Lord Liverpool presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and has the honour of informing your Majesty that your Majesty's confidential servants, having had under their consideration the petitions and memorials presented

<sup>1</sup> He was at that time ambassador to the Netherlands. In the end, however, he was sent on the special mission to Charles X.

<sup>2</sup> The whole of this angry correspondence is to be found in *Wellington's Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda*, vol. II, pp. 313-26.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

to your Majesty from the families of the peers attainted on account of the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, venture to recommend to your Majesty to propose to Parliament to reverse the attainders in the cases of the male lineal descendants of the families which are now existing, and were on those occasions attainted. This would include at present only four cases: the Earl of Mar, Viscount Kenmure, Baron Strathallan, and Baron Nairn. The Earl of Carnwath may be eventually upon the same principle added to the list; but he is at present in India, and has made no application.

If your Majesty should be graciously pleased to approve of the recommendation, your Majesty's confidential servants would humbly submit to your Majesty the justice and expediency of reversing the attainder in the family of Viscount Stafford.<sup>1</sup> In offering this advice to your Majesty they are not actuated by any personal feelings towards the family which will receive the advantage, but by an anxious desire to make some reparation, however tardy, for one of the greatest acts of injustice recorded in our history.

The King, it may be added, willingly agreed to these proposals.

That Liverpool was far from being the hidebound reactionary which he was in the past depicted is proved by his attitude towards slavery and the Slave Trade. As has been shown on an earlier page, at the commencement of his public life he had been opposed to any new legislation on the subject, but he had been convinced by the arguments of Wilberforce, and had become strongly opposed to the continuance of the Slave Trade. So far as Britain was concerned this had been suppressed by the ministry of "All the Talents," but Liverpool took every opportunity of urging foreign countries to follow the British example in this respect. Hardly, for example, had Louis XVIII returned to Paris after Waterloo than Liverpool is found writing to Castlereagh, under date of July 7th, 1815:

I need hardly remind you of the Slave-trade. I should hope Louis XVIII can have no difficulty in confirming in some way or other what has been done by Buonaparte on this subject. He owes it to us, who will have restored him to his throne; and indeed, if he does not meet our wishes on this point, I do not see how we ever shall be able to satisfy the country of our exertions.

In the last years of his life Liverpool showed himself ready to go further still, and expressly declared himself in favour of the total abolition of slavery as soon as an improved education

<sup>1</sup> His ancestor had been one of the victims of Titus Oates.

and a higher standard of civilization had qualified the slaves for the enjoyment of their freedom. In the House of Lords in March 1826 he stated this to be the goal for which all must strive. He made allowance for the opposition to the views of the government which had been manifested in some quarters, and he reminded his hearers of the great power which "prejudice and the inveteracy of particular habits" exercised over the mind. For this reason he was willing to view with indulgence "the common infirmities of human nature, and to allow a considerable time for the growth of reason and the subsidence of heated feelings," and he was therefore "necessarily averse to the use of any language which might be productive of injury to his object," but if compulsion should prove necessary he would not hesitate to enforce it—"That Parliament, when called on, would do its duty and assert its paramount authority, he could not hesitate for a moment to think."

That Liverpool was always ready to support a colleague had been shown in the case of Canning and the recognition of the former Spanish colonies; that he was ready to take the initiative when occasion arose we have seen in the matter of slavery and the Slave Trade; in the last months of his life he displayed the same qualities again over the Corn Laws. Into this complicated question it is unnecessary to enter in any detail, and it will suffice to say that in the spring of 1826 there was renewed unrest (to some extent due to the aftermath of the financial crisis of the previous winter), particularly in Lancashire, and riots took place in Manchester, Blackburn, Wigan, and elsewhere which were only suppressed with the aid of the military, who in some instances were obliged to use artillery against the rioters. If famine, and consequently further disturbance, was to be prevented, some modification of the existing law was clearly necessary, and Liverpool at once secured the passage of legislation allowing the importation of foreign corn during the emergency; nor was this all, for he had the courage to exceed the powers given him, and to seek an indemnity from the new Parliament which was about to be elected. A letter<sup>1</sup> to Canning written on August 29th, 1826, defines his attitude.

<sup>1</sup> B.M., Add. MSS. 38748 f. 151.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

I return Huskisson's paper with many thanks.

I quite agree with both of you as to the importance of an early discussion upon the Corn question by Cabinet. If Parliament should meet before Christmas, and it should be determined that our permanent Corn Bill could not be brought forward before the holiday, I shall nevertheless think the opinion of Government on the subject, should be *settled* before the meeting, for it will of course be impossible (meeting as we shall meet on the ground of distress and scarcity), to avoid daily debates, in which sentiments may be elicited which may prove very inconvenient, if the Cabinet are not agreed substantially upon the whole question.

I have been revolving the whole course of the proceedings in my mind, and I am quite satisfied that *you* and *I* ought to take the lead in the whole business both in Cabinet and Parliament. It will obviate much jealousy and prejudice, and will give an authority to our measure, which would not equally belong to it if it could be considered as a *Departmental question*.

God knows this is not a pleasant undertaking for either of us.

Unhappily, before "our permanent Corn Bill" could be introduced Liverpool was no longer at the helm.

If the Prime Minister was always ready to support a colleague he could be equally firm in resisting one if he thought he was in the wrong. An instance of this occurred in that same month of August 1826, when both Wellington and Wellesley pressed him hard to appoint their youngest brother to a vacant Irish bishopric. The individual in question was a clergyman of in-offensive personal character, remarkable neither for attention to nor neglect of his clerical duties, but he was separated from his wife in circumstances when he could easily have obtained a permanent separation, which, however, he made no attempt to secure. Liverpool had always been extremely scrupulous in the matter of ecclesiastical patronage, and he flatly refused to do what was asked of him. He did not mince his words to Wellington.

I can have no personal indisposition, God knows, to your brother Gerald, and I must have every possible wish to gratify you in an object which you have naturally so much at heart, and which can interfere with no views, public or private, of my own. It is from a conscientious sense of duty alone that I am compelled to say that no clergyman living separate from his wife ought to be raised to the episcopal bench.

I have the highest authority, living and dead, for saying this, and I am convinced that a departure from this principle in the case of your brother might be fatal to the Church Establishment in Ireland, considering all the circumstances of that Establishment.

## LAST YEARS

I am quite willing to acquit your brother Gerald of any misconduct in respect to his wife; but the relation in which he stands to her is with me a sufficient objection, not to his having better preferment, but to his being made a bishop.

I cannot, however, overlook the circumstance that he has not taken the usual remedy of persons in his station; that if he had taken it (without collusion) his whole conduct, and that of his wife, would have been before the world, and that in not having taken it he has unavoidably subjected himself to the imputation that something would have turned out upon the investigation not creditable to his former conduct. I do not say, however, that he may not have acted quite rightly, and that his conduct may not have been pure and spotless. I am willing to assume this to have been the case, but he cannot have, under such circumstances, that "good report from without" which I have always held to be quite essential to a man who is to become a bishop.

As is by no means unusual in such cases, Liverpool was at once accused of neglect and ingratitude by the whole Wellesley clan. This stung him, and on September 8th he unburdened himself to Arbuthnot.

I cannot accuse myself of having overlooked the Duke of Wellington's fair pretensions as to his family. At an early period of my Administration I recommended his mother, unsolicited, for a pension. I afterwards recommended his sister for the same, and I gave his brother-in-law, Cullen Smith, one of the best offices I ever had to dispose of. The chief inducement in these two latter cases was certainly to oblige him.

What were Lord Maryborough's claims to office, to Cabinet, and subsequently to a peerage? Certainly not his support of my Administration, for I had no more strenuous opponent till I was firmly established; and he had not to plead for it his connection with Lord Wellesley, for upon the schism between his brother and Perceval he took part with Perceval. I mention these matters for the purpose only of rebutting the allegation that the Duke of Wellington's family have been neglected. I have, in fact, done much more for them than I have for my own.

What was destined to be the last summer of Liverpool's political life was marked by a General Election, for one of the longest Parliaments of modern times<sup>1</sup> was dissolved at the end of May, and it was a great tribute to the Prime Minister's prestige and popularity that after he had been fourteen years continuously in office the electorate should have returned his supporters with an increased majority, while several of his leading critics lost their seats.

<sup>1</sup> Those elected in 1910 and 1935 were of longer duration, but they covered periods of war.



Yet, in spite of this victory at the polls, there were two major problems casting their shadow over the whole political situation. One was the question of the Corn Laws, with which Liverpool proposed to deal himself in the spring, and the other was Catholic Emancipation, which was an "open" issue so far as the Cabinet was concerned. How much longer it could remain in that state was one of Liverpool's major worries, and on December 16th he wrote in a letter to Robinson, "I cannot in a letter enter into all the particulars, but be assured the Government hangs by a thread. The Catholic question in its present state, combined with other circumstances, will, I have little doubt, lead to its dissolution in the course of this session." That thread was Liverpool's health, which was rapidly giving way—a fact which probably played its part in inducing him to write in so gloomy a tone in spite of the result of the recent General Election.

Little business had been transacted during the short autumn session, and when Parliament met again early in February 1827 great events had already cast their shadows before them. The Duke of York, heir presumptive to the throne, had died on January 5th, and the next in succession was the Duke of Clarence. On February 27th Liverpool proposed an increase in the new heir's allowance, and the obviously poor state of his health caused general comment. The next morning he retired after breakfast to his study, as was his habit, and shortly afterwards he was found by a servant on the floor in a state of insensibility.

Liverpool's illness was not the surprise to his contemporaries that it has sometimes been represented. In December 1826 he wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "I must begin by telling you that I have been *very ill*. I am recovering, but this last illness I cannot but consider as a hint that I am better fitted now for repose than for the labours, and still more for the anxieties, of the situation which I have held for so many years." He had worn himself out in his country's service, and like Pitt, Fox, and Canning he was to die at an age when a later generation of politicians considered themselves still in the prime of life.

It was not long before it became apparent that the Prime

Minister would never transact public business again, and that his colleagues would have to find his successor. On March 26th, Lushington<sup>1</sup> wrote to Knighton, "Lord Liverpool's real state has been explained to me, with much feeling, by Lady Liverpool, and it is quite clear that for some time to come he can be competent to no public business, and that the hope of his ultimate recovery depends upon his being rigidly kept from it. That there is a pressure on the brain is unquestionable. Occasionally it subsides & reason resumes a limited power—but after a short respite Lord L. feels the pressure returning—puts his hand to his forehead—and in a state of pain and forgetfulness says, 'I am but a child,' and in sorrow sheds most plentiful tears."<sup>2</sup> In these circumstances he was quite unable to tender the King any advice as to who was to succeed him.

Liverpool maintained a feeble hold on life in these distressing conditions for another eighteen months, but at no time did he look like recovering, and he had at least one further stroke. He died on December 4th, 1828, and was buried on the 15th at Hawkesbury in Gloucestershire. His widow lived until 1846. As he had no children, the title passed to his half-brother, who thus succeeded as third Earl of Liverpool.

\* \* \*

"With Lord Liverpool's funeral cortège went also the dead body of the old Tory party—the party of George III and of Mr. Pitt, the party which inherited the flamboyant creed of 'Church and King,' the party whose honest unthinking supporters had stood behind two generations of able administrators. Canning was already dead and his followers were estranged from the party; Wellington and Peel were thinking of a strategic retreat upon the Catholic Question; Whigs had presumed to enter the Council Chamber and were hopefully awaiting the day when they might take full possession. The Tory Government had been identified with Liverpool; it was amply proved that no one could take his place."<sup>3</sup> With this judgment few are likely to disagree. With the removal of Liver-

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Rumbold Lushington (1776-1868), Joint Secretary of the Treasury.

<sup>2</sup> Aspinall, A., *The Letters of King George IV*, vol. III, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Brock, W. R., *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism, 1820-1827*, p. 284.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

pool from the political stage the Tory party broke up as, though for very different reasons, it had done when Anne died a hundred and thirteen years before: it was to revive for a brief space in the forties under the leadership of Peel, but not until the last quarter of the century did it really recover its old hold upon the country.

It has been alleged that Liverpool never had a policy, but the charge cannot really be substantiated unless it is meant to imply that he did not identify himself with any of the various bodies of zealots who were advocating this or that remedy for the country's ills. His policy both at home and abroad was moderation and conciliation, and his correspondence is evidence of the objectivity of his approach to the problems with which he was confronted. This is not, it is true, the road to fame, and it is not the course that either Canning or Wellington would have taken in his place, but then Canning and Wellington, when their turn came, proved themselves incapable of winning the confidence which Liverpool so long retained. Moderation in statesmanship does not always imply mediocrity of ability. Castlereagh may have been the most influential minister in the earlier years of his administration, and Canning in the later, but Liverpool was never the mere tool of either. On the contrary, he was, as has been shown in the preceding pages, treated with respect and deference by his numerous colleagues. In general capacity and debating power Liverpool was inferior to few of them; in temper, judgment, and experience he was superior to all.



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